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# Reflections on Developing a Campus-Wide Workshop Series on Contemplative Practice and Social Justice

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*Contemplative practices have been increasingly used in higher education to enhance student well-being and academic success. More recently, educators, activists, and researchers are exploring how contemplative practices and perspectives may support promotion of social justice on and outside college campuses. In this reflection, we share the development, execution, and evaluation of a campus-wide workshop series held at San Francisco State University (SFSU). The series promoted reflection and discussion on the relationship between contemplative practice and social justice to improve campus climate, enhance well-being of campus members, and promote student success.*

## INTRODUCTION

Contemplative practices have been increasingly used in higher education to enhance student well-being and academic success (Chiodelli et al., 2020; Ergas, 2019; Zajonc, 2016). More recently, educators, activists, and researchers are exploring how contemplative practices and perspectives may support social justice on and outside college campuses (e.g., Basu et al., 2019; Magee, 2017). In light of the aftermath of the video recording of Minneapolis police killing of George Floyd, an African-American man, and the widespread protests that erupted against police brutality, we feel this work is particularly relevant at this time. Systemic racism and white privilege are being discussed nationally, along with efforts to revisit our racist history and implement policies, practices, and symbols aligned with racial justice. The #BlackLivesMat-

ter movement has been embraced by large numbers of white Americans who are heightening awareness of white privilege, as evidenced by the *New York Times* Bestseller List comprised predominantly of books on race and white privilege in the U.S. during the weeks of the protests (McEvoy, 2020). Universities have a vital role to play in maintaining this momentum towards social justice by creating opportunities for students, faculty, staff, and administrators to reflect on systemic racism and white privilege, as well as other forms of oppressions and privileges, and increase personal and collective commitment towards more equitable and inclusive practices and policies. Contemplative practices have an important contribution to make towards these efforts. In this paper, we share the development, execution, evaluation, and reflections of a campus-wide workshop series held at San Francisco State University (SFSU). The series promoted experiential engagement and discussion on the relationship between contemplative practice and social justice to improve campus climate, enhance well-being of campus members, and promote student success.

## BACKGROUND

SFSU is one of the most racially and ethnically diverse student bodies in the U.S. (US News & World Report, 2019). Our university has a long history of commitment to social justice and opposition to systemic oppression and marginalization, including student protests in 1968-1969 which led to the creation of the first College of Ethnic Studies in the U.S. More recently, Alicia Garza, M.A., a graduate student in the College of Ethnic Studies in 2013, first inspired the phrase "Black Lives Matter" as a response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the shooting death of Trayvon Martin and, along with fellow activists, gave birth to a new civil rights movement (Day, 2015). University commitment to social justice and the college has wavered over time however, prompting rallies, students camping out on campus, petitions demanding support for Ethnic Studies, and four students undergoing a 10-day hunger strike in 2016 to pressure the university to reinvest in its social justice mission and support the College of Ethnic Studies (Herrera, 2016).

After the election of President Donald Trump in November 2016, racial tensions and fears across the country increased (Newman et al., 2020; Williamson & Gelfand, 2019). Many campus communities were affected by these events. In the months following the election, 25% of students at one university reported clinically significant levels of stress that could lead to a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (Hagan et al, 2018). Scores were higher among women and students of color. Given our university's diversity and commitment to social justice, our campus was also deeply affected. Faculty struggled with how to address post-election concerns, climate, and trauma in classrooms.

To address the collective impact of these issues, SFSU initiated a campus-wide call for proposals to sponsor faculty-led workshops, entitled "How to be a University in a World of Conflict," in order to "foster conversation and strengthen our capacity for mutual understanding, community, and engagement" (San Francisco State University, 2017). Recipients were required to lead at least four workshops in one semester. Proposals were renewable for a second semester with similar requirements.

We, the first two authors, Jennifer Daubenmier and Christopher J. Koenig, had recently presented a poster at the ninth annual Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education conference, "Radicalizing Contemplative Education: Compassion, Intersectionality, and Justice in Challenging Times" (Association of Contemplative Mind in Higher Education, October 2017). Meeting a network of colleagues interested in similar ideas gave us confidence to extend conversations at the conference to our institution. We proposed a workshop series entitled "Breathing In, Speaking Up: Contemplative Practice and Social Justice." The overall goal was to explore how contemplative practices and perspectives could contribute to social justice while improving campus climate, well-being of campus members, and student success.

Once the proposal was funded, we formulated a conceptual framework for our workshops. We wanted participants to have experiences with contemplative practice and discussion of contemplative perspectives from contemporary and wisdom traditions. We also wanted to balance workshops with selected short readings and videos with interactive dyadic, small, and large group activities.

## THEORETICAL AND CONTEMPLATIVE INFLUENCES

We drew on Berila's (2016) *Mindfulness-Based Anti-Oppression Pedagogy* as a guiding framework. We began with the premise that external tensions and conflict are influenced by pre-existing values, perceptions, and beliefs resulting from social identities with respect to race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, religion, migration history, immigration status, (dis)ability status, other social categories, as well as family of origin relational dynamics. We wanted the workshops to increase awareness of how we all are socialized into ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that can perpetuate structural systems of oppression. Awareness and transformation of inner and outer conflict is challenging, as it requires vulnerability, patience, and dedication. However, we believe each person has the potential to transform perceptions of self and other and cultivate a greater capacity to respond to conflict in ways that maintain social connection and promote insight for growth.

Our workshops also drew on wisdom traditions that facilitate transformation towards greater self-awareness, interconnection, and social responsibility. His Holiness the Dalai Lama and others have noted that schools and universities predominantly train students to develop skills to enter the work force but social-emotional intelligence and ethics for living in a diverse, interconnected world are not routinely taught (Dalai Lama, 2017; Steel, 2014). This oversight poses a challenge in training future generations of citizens who can respond to conflicts peacefully and equitably and not be driven solely by self-interest. In response to these trends, the Dalai Lama called for the creation of universal secular ethics that can be embraced across religions, nationality, and systems of values and beliefs. The goal is to "educate the heart" through reasoning and contemplative skills that cultivate love, compassion, justice, forgiveness, mindfulness, and tolerance in our educational systems in order to create more peaceful and just societies (Dalai Lama, 2001, 2012).

We integrated principles of these secular ethics informed by Buddhist perspectives with Berila's (2016) framework to guide our theoretical approach. Each workshop highlighted one or more of these elements to support dialogues and discussions. We outline these perspectives in a sequential, cohesive manner in Table 1.

| Table 1: Guiding Theoretical Principles |
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| 1. *Recognition of Basic Dignity.* One function of contemplative practice is to recall, in a felt, embodied manner, our inherent worth, wholeness and dignity as human beings, not dependent on social standing, performance, achievement, or other conditions. This respect for life is inherent in the living, breathing, knowing person and each individual has the same dignity as any other individual. Social justice definitions often recognize a fundamental dignity of all human beings (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007; Rawls, 1971). |
| 2. *Common Humanity.* We all desire similar assurances in life, including to be safe from harm, have access to basic life necessities, be well-regarded by others, and have freedom for self-determination. Just as all human beings desire health and happiness, we all share experiences of sadness, anger, loneliness, and fear, although particular narratives and contexts may differ. |
| 3. *Interdependence.* Each individual is a product of biological, family, community, cultural, national, and environmental factors. Our thoughts, identities, feelings, values, sense of self, and motivation are shaped by these contextual factors. In addition, everyone's life is a product of innumerable actions of others, close and far, that sustain the life of any one individual. Awareness of the interconnection of all life can lead to profound gratitude and appreciation for others. |
| 4. *Awareness of Structural Systems of Oppression.* We are born into social and institutional systems, often with a legacy of oppression, which disproportionately empower and privilege some social groups over others, which thus contributes to inequitable distribution of resources and higher rates of trauma, chronic stress, and lack of self-worth in some group members. We further recognize the interdependence of power and privilege, such that for some groups to enjoy privilege, others |

Table 1, continued: Guiding Theoretical Principles

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| need to be disenfranchised. As discussed by Berila (2016), privilege refers to unearned benefits that confer societal acceptance and ease of life for dominant group members but are denied to marginalized groups. Societal norms are in favor of whites, heterosexuals, and men, for example, and those who don't fall into these categories are considered "other" and are vulnerable to discrimination, invisibility, and less access to societal resources (Wildeman & Davis, 2005; Rothenberg, 2008). |
| 5. *Cultivation of Attention and Self-Care.* Through contemplative practices, such as meditation, movement, and other culturally-relevant practices, we can cultivate increased awareness, relaxation, self-compassion, and self-care to release trauma, manage stress, and begin to heal body, mind, and spirit. |
| 6. *Awareness of Internalized Oppression.* We can also cultivate awareness of our social conditioning and recognize it as an internalization of external processes rather than an essential aspect of ourselves. With increased self-awareness, we see patterns, not to blame or judge ourselves, but with curiosity and self-compassion, and to discover the freedom to let go of harmful, dysfunctional, and oppressive beliefs and create new identities, meanings, and actions. |
| 7. *Deep Listening.* With greater calmness and clarity, we can be more present to others. Being heard is healing. Not being heard or seen is alienating, debilitating, painful, and ruptures relationship. Deep listening can increase understanding, compassion, forgiveness, and tolerance. To resolve conflicts, we need to hear and understand each other to understand the whole of which we are a part. Jon Kabat-Zinn said, "to not know what you don't know can be harmful to others" (2018, November 11). This may be particularly relevant for members of dominant groups who may have little understanding of experiences and perspectives from members of marginalized groups. Furthermore, bringing awareness to our own potentially uncomfortable reactions as we listen to others is also a part of deep listening. |

Table 1, continued: Guiding Theoretical Principles

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| 8. | *Compassion.* After recognizing human dignity, common humanity, the interdependent nature of life, and developing attention, connection, and concern for others, the motivation to alleviate suffering of others is a natural extension. Compassion can be understood as having three components: the awareness of another's suffering or need, the emotional resonance or empathetic response to their suffering, and an intention or motivation to alleviate that suffering (Jinpa, 2015). |
| 9. | *Social and Civic Responsibility.* In order to promote social justice, institutional and governmental policies that lead to discrimination and inequities need to be replaced with equitable ones. Individuals and communities must engage in social and political action to change these policies. Engaging in social action and being of service can also enhance one's own health and well-being through meaning, purpose, and satisfaction, and ultimately, the recognition that serving others serves oneself (Jinpa, 2015). |

## WORKSHOP FORMAT AND CONTENT

Campus-wide announcements were made by the Provost's Office, and we additionally recruited participants through our personal networks. We were given a budget of $1000 per semester to cover workshop costs, the majority of which was spent on catering. We held eight, 1.5-hour workshops mid-day across the year and provided lunch for participants with vegetarian and non-vegetarian options. The Center for Equity and Excellence in Teaching & Learning gave us space to run workshops. The mid-day time and central location of the workshops facilitated participation across campus. Each session included nine to 17 participants, including facilitators.

The Fall 2017 workshop sessions were co-facilitated by the first and second authors and focused on definitional issues of contemplative practice, social justice, their application, and relevance to current events. Participants were faculty, staff, students, and administrators. In the Spring 2018 semester, workshops were co-facilitated with invited colleagues to increase the diver-

sity of perspectives related to contemplative practice and social justice and engage in conversations we might otherwise not have with our colleagues. Colleagues were offered a modest honorarium.

While each workshop had its own structure, in general, workshops began with self-introductions and an invitation to eat lunch. After 15 minutes, facilitators brought everyone together for a brief meditation and introduced the day's topic. Sessions typically ended with a whole group discussion. A summary of each workshop's topic and activities follows.

**Fall Semester 2017**

**Workshop 1. Introduction to contemplative practice and social justice.** We began with introductions in which people indicated their interest in the topic and what they hoped to learn. The introductions took the majority of time for the first session as participants had much they wanted to share. We then discussed their understandings of contemplative practice and provided a handout of the Tree of Contemplative Practices to discuss a broad range of practices that can be included (Bergman & Duerr, 2015). One facilitator led a short guided, sitting mindfulness meditation on body and breath awareness based on Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction which lasted five minutes, and ended the session with a bell. Interested participants were encouraged to speak with facilitators about establishing a meditation practice outside of the workshops.

**Workshop 2. What is "social justice"?** In order to provide continuity to the group discussion from the previous week, we summarized themes raised by participants from session 1 in terms of definitions of contemplative practice. We then discussed what social justice meant to individuals in the group and provided definitions collated from social justice organizations. Next, we discussed how we as individuals internalize systems of injustice and adopt beliefs and stereotypes against social groups of which we may be members. We presented a brief video of Beth Berila discussing the "imposter syndrome" (Berila, 2017) as a form of internalized oppression and discussed reactions and our own experiences of the imposter syndrome through the lenses of race, gender, and other identities in a large group.

**Workshop 3. How can we integrate contemplative practice and social justice?** This workshop showed a short video clip of a conversation between Jon Kabat-Zinn and Angela Davis discussing how mindfulness and social justice can work together (this video is no longer freely available, however, we recommend two similar videos to consider in its place: williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2020; Magee, Kabat-Zinn, & Cooper, 2020). After discussion, we presented a short video by Thich Nhat Hanh on deep listening (Hanh, 2012). We then led a guided meditation to recall an event that involved personal experience with an unresolved social injustice and how the situation could be perceived from a wisdom perspective. In pairs, individuals took turns practicing deep listening as their partner discussed the event and how to resolve or gain insight from it. This exercise took 15 minutes, after which participants shared insights in a larger group discussion.

**Workshop 4. Relating contemplative practice and social justice to current events.** We applied the concepts of deep listening to current issues of sexual harassment and racial/ethnic tensions. We used texts focusing on women's stories of sexual harassment and assault that ultimately resulted in the #MeToo movement and people of African descent describing the pain of not being heard (De Robertis, 2017; Eddo-Lodge, 2017). Small groups discussed these issues and shared comments with the full group. We then led a guided meditation on "next steps" focusing on how participants could integrate workshop ideas into their lives and then gave participants the opportunity to write down their next steps and share in the large group. Finally, we gave each participant Thich Nhat Hanh's (1975) *Miracle of Mindfulness* to inspire further contemplative practice and, ultimately, service to others.

### Spring Semester 2018

**Workshop 5. Embodied learning to increase awareness of social-cultural issues.** This workshop led by Maiya Evans introduced embodied learning activities that build community while addressing social issues. Participants first engaged with an interactive activity to build connection by organizing themselves in chronological birthday order without talking. Participants then explored power dynamics by mimicking move-

ments of a partner in silence. Next, participants explored cultural differences in a simulation game by creating separate fictitious tribes which were ultimately combined to create a third culture combining elements of each tribe. Finally, participants paired up to practice compassion in a silent activity where the pairs contemplated statements of compassion while looking into their partner's eyes. Short discussions followed each activity to address issues of social identity, power dynamics across social groups, and compassion.

**Workshop 6. Acknowledging universities as places of evaluation, judgment, and fear.** This workshop was led by Lisa Moore. After an opening meditation and introductions, the facilitator discussed the importance and value of acknowledging fear in the classroom among faculty and students and encouraged the practice of fearlessness. When afraid, it is difficult, if not impossible, to be creative, open learners. It is also difficult to meet others and oneself with compassion. Working with justice and diversity requires the capacity to sit with one's fears and hear from people whose vulnerabilities are often not readily visible. Participants were paired with one another in mixed faculty, staff, and student dyads to practice deep listening as each partner shared their fears about the university or larger community for five minutes each and then talked together in pairs for five minutes, for 15 minutes total. Reactions and insights were shared in a large group discussion for the rest of the session.

**Workshop 7. Embodiment as awareness, privilege, and intersection.** This workshop led by Christopher J. Koenig invited participants to increase awareness of themselves as an embodied being and the relationships between socialization and intersectionality. We practiced awareness of how these processes are experienced and come to inscribe meaning to the body. Exercises included a yogic practice of slowly raising one's arms overhead with a focus on full-body breathing, a five-minute standing meditation, and a 10-minute walking meditation. Interactive exercises included standing in close proximity to another person face-to-face in pairs and trios. We conducted this exercise with eyes open and closed, silently and while talking, to explore how another person's presence can affect one's own embodiment, sense of self, and awareness of privilege, and (dis)ability. There was facilitated discussion after each exercise.

**Workshop 8. Mindfulness of eating and its social-cultural influences.** This workshop led by Mickey J. Eliason introduced mindful eating and described a research project using Intuitive Eating, a form of mindfulness drawn from the "Health at Every Size" model (Bacon, 2010) and adapted for older sexual minority women. We discussed resistance to the word *mindfulness* among members of non-dominant groups. Participants were then guided through a mindful eating exercise with the lunch that was provided and identified one's own words for physical, psychological, and emotional hunger cues, showing how individuals described their own hunger. In the last half of the workshop, each participant shared how family, social, and cultural background shaped attitudes towards and experiences of eating and food.

## PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION

The institutional support contributed a small budget for meals, honoraria, and books for participants and invited facilitators, and while the community of participants may have appreciated these things, interest in contemplative practice and social justice drove participation. On the last workshop of each semester we administered a survey asking participants a series of fixed response and open-ended questions. We submitted our project to the SFSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) as program evaluation (Protocol #2020-116). It was exempted from IRB oversight because program evaluation is not considered research as its aim is not to produce generalizable findings, but rather to evaluate the processes, procedures, and products of a program for the purpose of quality improvement and, in our case, to disseminate the lessons we learned about implementing a contemplative practice and social justice program in our institution to help others who may want to adapt these lessons to a new setting. Overall, 20 participants who completed the surveys were overwhelmingly positive with the majority of participants saying the meditations, discussions, and topics were "extremely helpful." We summarized the open-ended comments into three main themes.

First, participants described how workshops increased their understanding of contemplative practice as an important element of self-care that contributes to their quality of life and work. For example, one par-

ticipant stated that workshops helped them to "slow down and reflect" while another wrote it helped "to pause during a busy week." Second, participants increasingly became aware of the impact of contemplative practice in their everyday lives. One participant wrote, "I have learned breathing techniques and other mindfulness practices that I can apply at my leisure." Two participants reflected on the importance of mindfulness during work. One wrote, "I will bring this mindfulness with me when I start working. It'll enable me to separate events at work from personal life. And to try not to take things personally." Third, participants described appreciation of a greater sense of community. For example, a participant wrote that as a result of workshops, "I had the opportunity to connect with faculty, students, and staff from different departments, which is extremely helpful."

Participants were diverse in terms of disciplines, colleges, and campus programs and included faculty, staff, administrators, and students. However, participants were primarily white, particularly in the first semester. Facilitators took the opportunity to address issues of white privilege and fragility during discussion in the context of deep listening, particularly in the fourth workshop. However, in the future, we acknowledge the need to explore how to attract more racially/ethnically diverse participants who better reflect the student body and perhaps more clearly address issues of structural oppression at each workshop.

Interestingly, workshops led to several campus and individual-level innovations. For example, one participant who was the director of a campus tutoring center started a meditation group for student tutors with support of the Dean of Undergraduate Education and Academic Planning. Another campus director reported being more explicit about the importance of mental health and wellness in meetings with students and staff. One faculty enrolled in a self-compassion training course for professional development and shared resources with students. In summary, our workshops created an opportunity for interested campus members to come together, but a more long-term, ongoing workshop series would be needed to establish a community of stakeholders who could deepen their understanding of how contemplative and social justice practices can be integrated in order to more fully permeate campus

climate, resources, and policies and thereby enhance student success and well-being of the campus community.

## REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of the workshop series, we took an opportunity to reflect individually and collectively on how we were impacted over the course of the workshop series and what we learned. This was our first attempt of coming together as a diverse group of educators to explore how to integrate social justice with contemplative practice. Therefore, we further reflected on our process and how we could improve the workshop series if we were to do it again and provide recommendations to those who may wish to consider implementing similar workshops. Finally, in the last section, based on our observations, we provide a developmental learning model that may be helpful to consider when thinking about how educators can learn to incorporate contemplative practice and social justice pedagogy and perspectives into their classrooms.

The university call for proposals was an opportunity for us to explore the connections and synergy between contemplative practice and social justice in an academic context. After it was funded, the first two authors set about the task of developing an outline of curriculum and format for the sessions. We did not have a clear roadmap. We wanted to explore ideas organically and envisioned rich discussions that we would facilitate without necessarily providing answers. We began with discussions about definitions of contemplative practice and social justice. After the first workshop, we noticed many participants had genuine interest in these issues but did not necessarily have experience with contemplative practice. Some of us felt a certain self-consciousness discussing meditation on campus, as if people were coming out of the closet from isolated locations to discuss their interests in an open forum. We felt the courage each person had to come to the group and knew we had to establish trust for the group to be successful, to be vulnerable in a safe place among diverse students, faculty, staff, and administrators. We felt the importance of starting each session with a meditation, to shift the norms of typical academic interactions to come together as fellow human beings first and foremost beyond our identities in the academy.

The first two authors were also aware that we were two white, relatively privileged co-facilitators discussing social justice in a diverse group setting with limited training. We wanted to open the facilitation role to other colleagues with similar interests to increase the diversity of perspectives and create greater community among colleagues. It was great fun to reach out to colleagues and invite them to share their interests and expertise in this area. Through their involvement, we learned new ideas and methods for using contemplative practices to engage students in discussions of social justice in the classroom. The overall experience gave us more confidence in establishing trust and talking about challenging issues of oppression, privilege, and social justice in a diverse group setting. Moreover, the rich experiences and insights of the students driven by their diversity opened us up to seeing our students in the classroom as co-creators of knowledge.

## Lessons Learned

In this section, we share recommendations and suggestions based on our lessons learned for those who may wish to consider organizing similar workshops on their campuses.

1. Our series met for eight 1.5 hour workshops across two semesters. We found this timeframe to be minimally sufficient to introduce and discuss key topics and provide participants with new contemplative skills to incorporate into their lives and respective academic contexts. We suggest either more frequent meetings over a longer period of time or multi-hour workshops to allow for greater immersion, culture building, and language crafting.
2. Leadership and facilitator diversity is important. We felt a shift in participation once we diversified our facilitators to include people of color who had experience with contemplative practice and knowledge about social justice. In particular, we noticed that participants of color felt more at ease, confident, and engaged. Facilitators should both look like the population who attends the workshop and help expand the boundaries

of what is typically thought of as the norm. We believe a commitment at the outset from diverse members of the campus to serve on the core committee is important to ensure greater inclusivity of perspectives during planning, outreach, and implementation stages.

3. We recommend that facilitators in positions of privilege engage in prior reflection of their own privilege to feel comfortable acknowledging it in a diverse group setting. This self-awareness can help create a safer space for those from oppressed groups to share and to help everyone recognize how unacknowledged privilege can harm. Facilitators in positions of privilege may also be challenged in unexpected ways by members of oppressed groups, thus, they should be willing to be humbled, to listen, and to be open to feedback. When such instances arise, these experiences can serve as powerful examples for how participants in positions of privilege could potentially respond to such situations in the future.
4. We made some systematic efforts at outreach for potential participants and determined time availabilities with an initial cohort of interested participants. However, outreach among students, faculty, staff, and administrative leadership takes time to build. We suggest finding allies on campus who can assist with recruitment and to allow plenty of time for this crucial step to ensure diverse, inclusive participation.
5. Set the goals of the group modestly. Start with the assumption that attendees may have little to no preparation for the topics that will be discussed. This will maximize inclusion and help foster ongoing exploration for those with more preparation. If participants come with more experience, conversation can become more nuanced, but it may be helpful to prepare each session to accommodate the least experienced person in the room.
6. Decide a contemplative focus for the group and be open to including your personal contemplative interests (and passions).

All the facilitators in our group were dedicated to some form of contemplative practice, including both Theravada and Vajrayana Buddhism, hatha yoga, and mindfulness meditation. We chose mindfulness as a contemplative focus, however, we offered a range of practices. Some of us experienced a tension between offering contemplative practices that were assessable, which were potentially more generic, and practices that were rooted in particular religious and contemplative traditions, which require more context or adaptation to practice in a secular context. While our series was built directly from our personal experiences with contemplative practice, it was the first time some of us tried leading a group of diverse participants in these practices.

7. Include time for contemplative practice to give participants the actual experience of practices they might use outside of sessions. Participants may come with a range of experience in contemplative practice, from absolute beginner to regular practitioner. One goal of our sessions was to introduce contemplative practices that 1) we could conduct within a designated 10-15-minute time frame and 2) participants could use outside group sessions. In other words, we wanted to introduce contemplative practices that participants could take and adapt for their own use.

8. Be prepared with a safety plan and psychological support for participants. Participants can bring rich life experiences to discussions on contemplative practice and social justice. At the same time, trauma, food and housing insecurity, financial difficulties, systemic oppression, power, and privilege can potentially trigger painful emotional reactions during contemplative practice exercises. Facilitators should be sensitive to these issues and inform participants that these events can occur and give participants the flexibility to disengage with the practice at any time. Be prepared to provide resources and referrals for psychological support as necessary.

9. Be sensitive to current events and incorporate them into workshops as meaningful examples of application of the principles. Our session #4 on current events was particularly meaningful. The week we were planning that session, we serendipitously came across stories of women being sexually harassed as part of the #MeToo movement, and a writer of African descent describing the most painful aspect of social oppression, *not being heard or understood*. This helped participants to see a tangible connection between contemplative practice and social justice in the real world: we need to create opportunities and develop skills to hear and acknowledge one another's pain, especially in relation to privilege and oppression, as an important, yet easily overlooked step in creating social change.
10. Be prepared to have uncomfortable conversations. A large part of social justice work is having uncomfortable dialogue, especially in a diverse group in which individuals differ in positions of privilege and oppression. The richness of having a diverse group is that individuals can hear perspectives from those who differ from them in race/ethnicity, gender, class, and other social identities. However, at the same time, individuals may be exposed to their "blind spots," or not know how their perspectives could be offensive or harmful to others. People from marginalized groups may be especially affected when this occurs. Facilitators should be prepared to step in to acknowledge and address potential harm while also acknowledging that such conversations are valuable for expanding our knowledge about experiences of people who are different from us.
11. Use workshops as an opportunity for reflection and growth in your role as an educator. As the workshops were open to students as well as faculty, staff, and administrators, typical power hierarchies between students and faculty were blurred, allowing faculty and students to participate more equally as co-creators of knowledge. Thus, each workshop raised critical questions about positionality and power that were generalizable to

classroom pedagogy. For example, one facilitator asked: How can I walk the razor's edge of tempering my ascribed privilege while being responsible for the learning of students who differ from me in age, ethnicity, race, and other social identities? Another facilitator was challenged to be more thoughtful about acknowledging students' real-world experiences when practicing contemplative methods. Students offered key insights with regards to their everyday struggles as students and their life experiences. Often times as educators we focus so closely on class material that we are not always attuned to the needs and experiences of the students.

12. Be open to personal and professional integration and institutional transformation. Collectively, our workshops helped to move us out of our comfort zone as educators by trying new techniques to create meaningful learning experiences without holding too tightly to our own expectations about the learning process. Many of us valued the experience of bringing our personal contemplative practice into an academic context. One facilitator noted: "It was lovely and liberating to bring the work I have done elsewhere into the place where I spend the most time and have witnessed quite a lot of pain." The experience of bringing our contemplative work "out of the closet" gave us more confidence. Furthermore, it allowed us to see how contemplative practices can be used as tools to better understand meta-concerns related to social justice in academia. For example, a common disjunct between professed ideals and actual practice of social justice in academia can be understood intellectually by gathering and analyzing data. Yet, this tension can be eased and transformed by contemplative practices that admit confusion and ambiguity and which do not let us retreat into rigid structures and scripts. Overall, we felt we were bringing a transformative process to academia which is necessary in order to meet the challenges of our world and our time.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND A PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTAL LEARNING MODEL OF CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR EDUCATORS

This paper reports and reflects on our year-long workshop series at SFSU addressing the intersection of contemplative practice and social justice. Overall, the workshops were well-received and highly attended. However, as our reflections show, there is much more work yet to be done.

Reflecting on the year's activities, we came to several conclusions. First, although most instructors at our institution consider themselves to be aligned with social justice issues, very few have training in how to teach within a social justice framework. While an instructor might introduce controversial topics via readings, films, or discussions, most have no systematic way of thinking about their pedagogy when teaching social justice content. What is true with regards to social justice is doubly so concerning contemplative practice. While several participants in our workshop series had personal experience with contemplative practices, few had any experience bringing them into the classroom or other campus setting. Both contemplative practice and social justice are complex topics that may need to be considered—and practiced—separately before they can be integrated. Our workshops were designed to increase awareness and demonstrate some practices that could be used in the classroom, but for logistical reasons, we did not have time for participants to actually practice these activities in their own settings and provide reflection and feedback. To fully integrate these topics, participants could likely use scaffolding in their awareness and implementation of both social justice and contemplative practice pedagogy. For example, many participants noted that they were students of a contemplative practice such as yoga or meditation but may not have considered that they could teach some forms of these practices in their classrooms. They may need support to explore which practices they feel confident to share with students, starting with very simple activities. Similarly, social justice pedagogy builds from simple changes in a class to more transformative practices. Both might be introduced in increments.

Second, participants were eager to engage in discussions about contemplative practice, yet most lacked confidence about how to incor-

porate contemplation into their individual roles and identities within the institution. Teaching faculty were unsure how to incorporate contemplation into classrooms. Staff, administrators, and leadership were eager to embrace contemplative experience but wanted ideas for how to apply these activities in their organizational units. Students were eager to explore ideas and experience different contemplative approaches to help manage anxiety and stress and to bolster well-being, but they also raised questions about how to apply contemplative tools in different areas of their lives. Everyone seemed to want a community to explore contemplative practice and social justice, and our workshops helped to create a temporary community at the university to hold this space.

Reflecting on the final evaluation comments and discussion in the workshops over the year leads us to the conclusion that participants first needed to learn about and experience contemplative practices before they could apply them to social justice education. In other words, we suggest that integrating contemplative practice and social justice may occur as a series of *developmental stages* (see Robert Kegan, 1982). The first stage may be to talk about contemplative practice (or social justice or both) in academia and learn to feel comfortable "coming out of the closet" as a contemplative practitioner. For example, as a result of an individual's experience with a contemplative practice, they may first reflect on the role of contemplative practices in their own lives. This reflection may lead to ideas about how these tools might be applied to their teaching, workplace, and everyday life. A second stage may be to learn basic skills for how to introduce contemplative practice in the classroom as a social justice issue. Imposter syndrome, stress and anxiety, systemic inequality, including racism, homophobia, misogyny, etc., can all be addressed with both contemplation and social justice practices. That is, social justice topics may raise emotional responses (painful memories, anger, sadness, frustration, guilt, blame, hopelessness) that can interfere with learning; contemplative practices can be used to help students move through these emotional states and not shut down in the classroom. This stage may include several pilot tests with small exercises that take little time to implement. After each session, the individual should take time to reflect on how the practices did or did not work and why. This could

serve as the basis to develop a framework for evaluating their own reflective teaching practice. A third stage may be to begin to integrate contemplative practice and social justice more systematically throughout a curriculum. This may involve imbedding contemplative practices throughout the semester, or even throughout a program so that they become a natural part of the learning process for faculty and students. Resistance is likely to pop up at every stage. Historically, the mind/body/spirit split in western culture led to a belief that academic institutions should focus only on cognitive strategies for learning, so contemplative practices are relegated to emotional, spiritual, or religious activities that are not considered as pedagogy. This belief needs to be explored and dismantled so that academic institutions learn to value contemplative practices for the ways that they complement and enhance other forms of learning. While our workshops created an opportunity for diverse stakeholders to come together to discuss these issues, a longer term, ongoing series would be needed to develop and deepen our understanding of the connections between contemplative practice and social justice and support faculty as they explore implementing new pedagogies in their classes.

Studying the processes of teaching within a contemplative framework is relatively new, but Owen-Smith's (2018) *The Contemplative Mind in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* offers frameworks for teaching and research. She suggests that contemplation was originally at the heart of education, but the contemplation piece was lost in the last century as educational practices became more pragmatic, technological, and skills-based. The resurgence of interest in contemplative practices stands to improve the quality of education in general and provide students with knowledge and skills that extend beyond the intellectual/cognitive realm that will serve them well in life. Research also indicates that contemplation practices such as mindfulness meditation may improve well-being and academic performance of undergraduate students (e.g., Canby, Cameron, Calhoun, et al., 2015; Greeson, Juberg, Maytan, et al., 2014; Calma-Birling & Gurung, 2017). Providing students with contemplative practice is both a life skill and a social justice issue vital to all beings living in the early twenty-first century. Our hope is that others can learn from our experience and be inspired to offer related programs in their own universities to create a more reflective, compassionate, and just world.

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