

# Journal of Contemplative Inquiry

---

Volume 8 | Number 1

Article 1

---

2021

## Preface

David Sable

Trudy Sable

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digscholarship.unco.edu/joci>

---

### Recommended Citation

Sable, David and Sable, Trudy (2021) "Preface," *Journal of Contemplative Inquiry*. Vol. 8: No. 1, Article 1.  
Available at: <https://digscholarship.unco.edu/joci/vol8/iss1/1>

This Introduction is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarship & Creative Works @ Digital UNC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Contemplative Inquiry by an authorized editor of Scholarship & Creative Works @ Digital UNC. For more information, please contact [Jane.Monson@unco.edu](mailto:Jane.Monson@unco.edu).

## Preface

In 2021 we honored the courageous leadership of Lila Shane in her role as Executive Director of CMind through troubled times and welcomed author, scholar, and activist Dr. David Robinson-Morris as our new Executive Director. Dr. Robinson-Morris' work is deeply committed to higher education that nurtures a politics of humanity and shared responsibility. "Education is complicit in the creation of the mess we now find ourselves in. However, education is also the means through which we can come to peace with ourselves and the planet..." His work and his bold vision tie auspiciously to this new volume of the *Journal of Contemplative Inquiry*.

In Volume 8 for 2021, we deepen and expand the explorations we began in previous issues on contemplative theory and classroom practices that challenge prevailing views of knowledge. Our authors do this through immediate experiences of embodiment and our interconnection. In 2019 and 2020, writers like Valin Jordan helped us "untangle the dualities that consume us." In this volume we further explore *what that means* and how it can fundamentally reshape how we think and act in higher education.

We begin with three articles that reframe how the arts can be used to open up new meaning and new connections to others and our environment. Further, we explore four new approaches to contemplative reading, intergroup dialogue, shared narratives from diverse cultural perspectives, and mindful research. We deepen the now familiar call for self-care, support communities for instructors, and healing, and we consider what it means to be a mindful researcher. Finally, we explore a unique forthcoming book with editor Ashwani Kumar in a reflective interview that may challenge even the most sophisticated reader.

In the reflection "Drawing as a Practice of Compassion" we are introduced by Rich Curtis to drawing as an awareness practice grounded in compassion through service-learning projects. For him, untangling "the dualities that consume us" included the observation that "even though

the artwork comes from my body and through my actions, it is not for me. Art is not about me. (Not me, not mine, not my self.)”

In the case study by Vanessa Cornett, “Music Listening as a Contemplative Practice in the College Classroom,” we notice humans can use musical experiences to understand and negotiate life events. Through music, we can practice navigating dissonance, recognizing bias, suspending judgment, and paying attention to silence or to the spaces in-between—working with the notable “dualities that consume us.”

In “Fostering Mindfulness Through Embroidery and Reverse Community-Engaged Learning,” author Smita Kumar writes about a three-credit academic course on mindfulness at a Moroccan university. That alone caught our attention because we are ordinarily so focused here at home in North America. To add to the uniqueness of her work, she discovered that when she invited an embroidery teacher from the local community, it promoted “reverse community-engaged learning.” It challenged students’ and educators’ assumptions about privilege, power, and class, it helped form new ties based on mutual respect, and so it untangled frustrating dualities that ordinarily consume us.

In the reflective case study “Contemplative Reading: Generosity, Meaning-making, Intolerance,” by Karolyn Kinane, we revisit another common duality that often rips us in two: the distinctions between critical reading and contemplative reading. Critical reading is a practice of distance and objectivity that can reinforce the notion of radical discontinuity between historical eras and among human experiences. Contemplative reading is a practice of generosity and connection that can generate self-awareness and transformative engagement with another. The author brings students to recognize, “If we can’t engage with what we want changed, we will not be able to change it. At times it is appropriate to face what we find repugnant and thoughtfully engage it.”

Maureen Hall, Jane Dalton, and Catherine Hoyser team up in the case study “Lectio Divina: A Contemplative Pedagogy for Promoting Embodied and Creative Learning in Higher Education Classrooms.” Once a Christian monastic practice, *lectio divina* has emerged as a contemporary contemplative practice that offers a pedagogical method aligned with many contemporary efforts to cultivate and value all dimensions

of being human: mind, body, spirit. *Lectio divina* is generally based on four primary movements: *lectio* (attention), *meditatio* (reflection), *oratio* (receptivity), *contemplatio* (transformation). The authors are professors in English, Education, and Arts Education respectively, and they each detail their teaching strategies for using *lectio divina* as a conduit for integrating the creative arts, including poetry, creative writing, and visual arts to deepen learning in higher education classes and untangle the heart-rending dualities that consume us.

Expanding from contemplative reading and *lectio divina* we move to an article on the theory and practice of dialogue as something much more than unstructured conversation. Here we see untangling dualities emerging out of interaction, not simply introspection. By reimagining Kramer's (2003) Insight Dialogue guidelines and infusing them with an anti-racist, mindfulness-based framework, author Jersey Cosantino introduces the Intergroup Dialogue model. The goal is a critical dialogic pedagogy that simultaneously seeks a coalition-based liberation rather than a battle of dualistic positions. Participants acknowledge that, for many, the "way out" has always been "in."

From western-based dialogue frameworks we move to a set of case studies on how shared narratives about mindfulness practices and Indigenous knowledge support the decolonization of teacher education curricula. Karen Ragoonaden, along with professors Tina Fraser and Ross Hoffman, and a student, Brenda Hebert, describe the beneficial impact of personal mindfulness practices in nurturing and cultivating the balance of the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions of the self. Within the context of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation's Calls to Action (2015), the authors observe the connections between mindfulness practices and local and place-based teachings of First Nation and Métis First Peoples. Here we learn what has always been beneath the tangled dualities that consume us.

In the next set of articles, we turn to the conditions that support a contemplative practice for students and instructors at all levels of education. In the case study "Monday Morning After: Sustaining a Mindfulness Practice after the Initial Retreat," Molly Serene Dunn focuses in depth on one teacher's experience with a mindfulness offering and her efforts to

sustain it over a five-month period. Drawing on findings from traditional case study research, she finds that a supportive group dynamic and accountability structures as vital both during the retreat and the subsequent months afterward. The author argues that professional learning communities supporting mindfulness (PLCs) might be a promising next step for the field of instructor and teacher development.

In the research article “Fostering Resiliency and Care: Integrating Self-Compassion Into a Graduate Course,” Heather Burns explores the impacts of integrating self-compassion theory and practice into a graduate level Comprehensive Exam course in sustainability education. In what ways do students perceive impacts on their work? Through an action research study, the author finds that students can untangle the dualities that consume us by learning to hold the space for all their emotions. Many learn to reduce negative self-talk. They integrate this practice into their identities, and into their relationships with others, including sensitivity around sharing their experience with people who are less privileged, people who are in social justice or social change work, or those who are just too pressured to do self-compassion homework exercises. It helped them not get trapped in perfectionism and guilt, long-standing dualities that consume us.

For a rigorous research article on the effects of meditation time for students in a university classroom, we turn to Kelsey Evans-Amalu, Becky Beucher, Shiva Jahani, and Suat Babayigit. “Meditation Time in the Classroom” adds evidence that basic mindfulness meditation for periods as brief as five or 20 minutes once a week for 15 weeks decreased individual psychological distress over time. The authors note that psychological distress is a term used to describe negative feelings that impact a person’s daily life, and is generally exhibited in the form of sadness, anxiety, distraction, and other symptoms of mental illness. The instrument used to measure distress included the context of a participant’s role in society and interpersonal relationships. It is not much of a leap for the reader to connect psychological distress with all the dualities that consume us noted in previous articles, even to point of students believing that they do not have time to practice mindfulness meditation for as little as five minutes per day. Mental health amongst post-secondary student pop-

ulations was getting worse before the pandemic and more recent media coverage shows that has continued. Here we see how students who practice mindfulness even for short periods respond, preparing the way for resiliency and positive, creative change.

In “The Mindful Researcher,” Emily McRobbie offers her personal reflections in a case study on how mindfulness practice enhanced the integrity of her research and invited reflection and acceptance of a new and evolving identity as a field researcher. Many novice researchers do not understand the complexities of doing field research. Here we see how regular mindfulness practice in the field in a remote location supported reflexivity, mindful presence, and valuable insights. She concludes, from her own experience, “Researcher choices reflect who we are and what we believe to be important. We often like to think that we can remain objective in our scholarly endeavors, yet we are situated within a particular context and make meaning based on our experiences....” The author’s honesty and authenticity are a hopeful inspiration for all researchers grappling with the dualities that consume us on a daily basis.

We close with David Sable’s interview/book review of the edited collection *Engaging with Meditative Inquiry in Teaching, Learning, and Research: Realizing Transformative Potentials in Diverse Contexts*, by Dr. Ashwani Kumar. This is a book that could upend the field of curriculum development in schools by challenging all the prevailing paradigms. It rings true and is consonant with the bold vision of our new Executive Director. It carries forward the creativity and hopefulness our authors nurture and see in our students’ hearts as they engage the dualities that consume us.

Sincerely,  
David Sable  
Trudy Sable  
Editors