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Mindful Writers, Sustainable Writing: Implementing Mindfulness Intervention to Support the Writing Practices of Advanced Academic Writers Engaged in High Stakes Writing

Nadia F. Zamin

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MINDFUL WRITERS, SUSTAINABLE WRITING: IMPLEMENTING MINDFULNESS
INTERVENTION TO SUPPORT THE WRITING PRACTICES OF ADVANCED ACADEMIC
WRITERS ENGAGED IN HIGH STAKES WRITING PROJECTS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirement for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Nadia Francine Zamin

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

May 2018

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of English

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Nadia Francine Zamin

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Dana Lynn Driscoll, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of English, Advisor

Curtis Porter, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of English

Daniel J. Weinstein, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of English

ACCEPTED

Randy L. Martin, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title: Mindful Writers, Sustainable Writing: Implementing Mindfulness Intervention to Support the Writing Practices of Advanced Academic Writers Engaged in High Stakes Writing Projects

Author: Nadia Francine Zamin

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Dana Lynn Driscoll

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. Curtis Porter
Dr. Daniel J. Weinstein

This mixed methods study examines the impacts of participation in a four-week, once-weekly program of mindfulness intervention on the self-efficacy, management of writing anxiety, and dissertation writing productivity of advanced academic writers across the disciplines engaged in high stakes writing projects.

Data was collected from participants in the form of self-report questionnaires and interviews at three distinct stages: before participation in the intervention program (pre-intervention), immediately following the conclusion of the intervention program (post-intervention), and one month following the close of the intervention program (follow-up). Post-intervention quantitative results reveal that participants experience strong and positive changes in their self-efficacy, management of writing anxiety, self-compassion, mindfulness, and dissertation writing productivity, while their mean responses at the follow-up test indicate more modest and lasting change in all of the categories. Qualitative data results at the post-intervention and follow-up stages indicate that participants' positive responses were due largely to the sense of constructive (though non-group therapy) community, atmosphere of non-judgment, discussion of the conditions surrounding the act of writing, and positive reinforcement of grounding mindfulness practices that constituted the intervention workshop sessions.

The results of this study have immediate implications for both the support of advanced academic writers and the field of Composition. This study suggests a number of evidence-based methods for supporting advanced academic writers across the disciplines (including thesis and dissertation writers), which can be implemented at the programmatic level in writing intensive graduate programs. A wider implication of this study pertains to methods of support for undergraduate and faculty writers across the disciplines (including undergraduate thesis writers and faculty members writing for pre-tenure, tenure-, promotion-, or publication). Finally, this study forwards a number philosophical and practical considerations for adapting the approaches and materials that were so effective for participants in the context of the present study so that they may be implemented from key sites to support academic writers in a variety of other contexts.

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Namaste.

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PREFACE

While the dissertation that appears here could be said to have begun in Fall 2015 with Dana Driscoll in a Leonard Hall office whose previous resident had been my good friend Mitch James, it is more accurate to say that this dissertation project had a number of beginnings. I began this project in 2010, in physical therapy with Mike Hilell; I began this project in 2012, in mindfulness trainings with Christine McCorkle; I began this project in doctoral coursework with Claude Hurlbert and Gloria Park; I began this project in meditation sessions at Sunflower Yoga Studio with Caleb Finegan; I began this project in the Memorial Athletic and Convocation Center at Kent State University where, to a packed audience, Elie Wiesel described how “anyone who listens to a witness becomes a witness.”

When I reflect on why I decided to pursue doctoral study, I can see that I did not have a well-formed intention for my life at the time; teaching was something that I had fallen into and it was not yet a passion. I had been teaching for three years at the college level and had realized in that time that I knew just enough about Composition pedagogy to know how very little I really knew. What I knew for certain was that writing from a place of gentleness, awareness, and non-judgment had saved my life and that maybe this kind of awareful writing could help other people, too.

I began the PhD program in Fall 2013 and while my experience has been consistent with anecdotal accounts of this time as one of intense effort and struggle, it should also be said that I did not begin this work purposefully. After two weeks in the doctoral program, I felt homesick and overwhelmed; I quickly lost the thread of my intentions – to help other people, to support others’ awarenesses – under the need to simply survive in the program. After two years in the program, at the end of my coursework, I felt somewhat misplaced; in a program culture of

relentless forward motion, I felt out of place among other doctoral candidates who seemed to just *know* what they would pursue for their dissertation research and to whom they would turn for professional guidance.

The shift in my experience of the doctoral program from something that was happening to me to something that I was consciously choosing was around November of 2015. Dana Driscoll had been assigned as my teaching mentor that semester and, through our work together, I began to feel my agency return to me. Having no dissertation advisor of my own, the tenor of our weekly meetings shifted fairly quickly from “Nadia-as-teaching-mentee” to “Nadia-as-dissertation-writer;” as a result of Dana’s openness to my questions about mindfulness in Composition, I found myself feeling much more invested in the dissertation process and that my project was becoming appreciably less hypothetical. Practicing a hybrid-prototype of the freewriting and intervals of mindful writing detailed elsewhere in this dissertation, I developed proposal language for a mixed methods study that would examine the extent to which mindfulness practices could evoke real change for dissertation writers across the disciplines (for, as it transpired, existing scholarship in Composition – and elsewhere – suggested that a substantial population of dissertation writers struggled with the same intangible senses of non-starting, lack of connection, and fear of failure which I had experienced). Finally, I had rediscovered and developed my original intention of supporting others’ awarenesses into an operationalized plan to do research.

A number of vital choices followed this operationalization: the choice of intervention design and constitutive mindfulness practices; the choice to open participation to advanced academic writers across the disciplines, rather than those solely enrolled in Composition or English programs; the choice to examine of the impacts of mindfulness intervention on

productivity and suffering on an individual (rather than programmatic or institutional) level; the choice to excerpt the Research Journal and withhold an explicit narrative of my own experiences with mindfulness practice. The attention to rigor, transparency, and necessity that characterize this project is a direct result of these choices and my receipt of valuable guidance; my agency in this project resides in these choices and in the text that follows.

Nadia Francine Zamin

April 1, 2018

CHAPTER 1

A GAP IN FIELD KNOWLEDGE

Introduction

In their 1999 meta-synthesis of research concerning doctoral student attrition, Bair and Haworth find that, over the previous thirty years, an average of 40-60% of doctoral students had left their advanced programs before defending their dissertations, with the highest rates of attrition consistently occurring in the humanities and social sciences (pp. 6-7). Unfortunately, these numbers seem not to have altered appreciably; Gardner estimates in 2008 that the rate of attrition has increased to 67% at its highest, while Hoffer et al. estimate that the time to completion of a doctoral degree in the Humanities has increased to an average of nine years (though it can extend up to twelve years, in some cases), the longest of any of the arts, sciences, or engineering fields (as cited in Ehrenberg, Jakubson, Groen, So, & Price, 2007, pp. 134-135).

The field of Composition cannot, unfortunately, stand apart from these disheartening statistics and must make strides to better understand how best to support graduate student writers in order to begin to counter this crisis of attrition. Though we in Composition have neither research concerning attrition rates in our own graduate programs, nor a concrete understanding of the causes of that attrition, as a constituent part of Humanities colleges across the nation, it is impossible to imagine that Composition programs do not combat the same complex problems as the programs included in the above meta-analyses: increased drop-out rates from doctoral students who run out of funding, run out of steam, or run out of hope (or, worst of all, run out of all three at once). However, much of our field's best wisdom is being brought to bear at only the undergraduate level, with the vast majority of writer-related Composition research focusing on supporting undergraduate writers (Inoue, 2015; Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015; Yancey,

Robertson, & Taczak, 2014); a worthy endeavor, to be sure, but not representative of the full field of in-need, at-risk university writers.

Similarly, much of what we in Composition know about the writing practices of graduate students is limited by the scope of existing research foci; while we have a number of well-articulated publications that theorize methods of graduate student writer support, these pieces tend to be based in researchers' own anecdotal experiences (often as graduate writers (Barrett & Hussey, 2015; Reardon, Deans, & Maykel, 2015)), rather than in empirical research concerning graduate students' writing practices or the effectiveness of those practices. And while we have a growing body of literature concerning the language negotiation behaviors of multilingual writers, (Grav & Cayley, 2015; Li, 2007), we still know little of how best to support the writing negotiation-related behaviors of these writers. We have little to no knowledge concerning how graduate writers manage their writing anxiety or practice self-compassion during what is often the most harrowing period of their academic careers, nor do we understand how these writers conceptualize their own ability to be productive and healthy future faculty members. Finally, both current and future intervention programs are severely hampered by the dearth of existing data concerning the effectiveness of such interventions; we in Composition know too little concerning what interventions and practices are actually working for our graduate student writers as they contend with the monolithic beast that is the dissertation writing process.

Trends in Existing Scholarship That Examines Graduate Student Writing Practices

Composition and Writing Across the Curriculum scholarship that examines the writing practices of graduate student writers falls largely under two categories: studies focused on issues of writing anxiety and writing difficulty and those that investigate the ability of writers to self-monitor and –regulate. Unfortunately for this study, Composition scholarship that examines the

writing practices of these writers is limited; more often, publications approach the issue from a theoretical perspective, suggesting intervention programs that are not supported by empirical research (as will be discussed below). Similarly, scholarship about how best to support graduate student writers as they pursue high stakes writing projects is only just beginning to appear and occurs most frequently in the mediums of as-yet unpublished conference presentations and in-progress dissertations; a surprising gap given the acknowledged high rates of attrition in Humanities and Social Sciences graduate programs. Of note is that while the scholarship discussed above occurs under the auspices of the Composition field and is often published in major Composition journals, much of this research occurs *outside* of Composition; in order to begin to understand the writing experiences of graduate student writers, Composition researchers have had to follow graduate student writers into many other fields and specialties, including the natural sciences (Bloom, 1981; Cotterall, 2011) and social sciences (Onwuegbuzie, 1998). Further, there is an unfortunate lack of consistency among existing scholarship concerning the points at which graduate student writers are studied; while some studies examine graduate student writers specifically as they attempt to enter their respective discourse communities (Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001; Maher et al., 2008), other studies do not disclose the level of their graduate student writer participants (Onwuegbuzie, 1998).

Writing anxiety and writing difficulty. The first category of existing scholarship that examines graduate student writing practices focuses on the writing anxiety and writing difficulty experienced by these writers, where ‘writing anxiety’ is the anxious feeling experienced by advanced academic writers that inhibits them in the act of writing (that is, an apprehension that arrests them in the physical act of writing) and ‘writing difficulty’ is the often larger relational or material realities that make writing difficult.

In her seminal 1981 *JAC* article, Bloom uses case studies to describe the sources of writing anxiety and writing difficulty facing her marine biology graduate student participants as varied and deeply problematic. Finding that much of graduate student writers' writing apprehensions stem from both their own expectations and their perceptions of their committee members' expectations of high performance and output based on past performance, Bloom is able to conclude that "paradoxically, a major source of writing anxiety among graduate students is their previous academic success" (1981, p. 3). The consensus among Bloom's participants seems to be "the more important the writing, the greater the apprehension" (1981, p. 3). Further, Bloom discovers that her graduate student participants are experiencing writing difficulty on an unexpected scale *and* on two fronts: in addition to the "overcrowded schedules" that are a result of numerous departmental, community, and work responsibilities (including volunteer work, second jobs, and committee meetings) and which lead participants to doubt the utility of their current efforts for their future lives, graduate student writers are also facing difficulty-inducing resistance "on the home front" (pp. 8-9). Though particularly true for her female participants, Bloom finds across her participants that for those graduate student writers who are involved in personal relationships with individuals not engaged in similar or comparable graduate study, writing time may well be "implicitly or explicitly sabotaged" (p. 9) out of a significant others' sense of emotional disconnect or inappropriate/inaccurate priorities. Among the many solutions that Bloom recommends to "enable graduate students to complete their work and earn their degrees in a realistic time period" (1981, p. 12), transparency in communication between committee and writer, sharing drafts, and *not expecting perfection* are chiefly discussed. For the purposes of this research, the latter recommendation is most notable; for though Bloom identifies that "a realistic balance" must be achieved between writing "efficiency and perfection" (1981, p.

17), she is unable or unwilling to flesh out the steps required to achieve, or even move healthfully toward, such a balance.

Building on the work of Bloom (1981), Onwuegbuzie (1998) applies Daly and Miller's (1975) Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) to a population of graduate student writers from a variety of humanities and social sciences fields in order to determine "the relationship between learning styles and writing anxiety" (p. 594). Originally a 26-item Likert-style measurement that was designed to assess levels of writing apprehension in undergraduate writers, Onwuegbuzie (1998) adapts the WAT to a graduate population in order to search out the specific conditions most directly associated with graduate student writers' experience of writing apprehension. Onwuegbuzie (1998) concludes that his participants' levels of writing anxiety are inseparably linked to their "learning styles," finding that, not unlike Bloom (1981), graduate student writers who prefer to, for example, be given clear instructions and parameters from professors and chairpersons are more likely to suffer both from an inability to write with flexible hours (here, a specific writing condition) and generalized writing anxiety (pp. 594-596). Onwuegbuzie's (1998) discussion effectively ends there, however; like Bloom (1981), he does not make recommendations for how best to support graduate student writers who experience condition-specific writing anxiety beyond identifying that "much more research is needed in this area" and finally echoing Bloom's call for increased transparency and communication between graduate student writers, professors, and chairpersons (pp. 595-596).

Extending this line of inquiry into the realm of multilingual graduate student writers, Cotterall (2011) focuses on the writing experiences of two (of her six total) case study participants writing in the contexts of doctoral programs at an urban Australian university. Using a method of thematic narrative analysis, Cotterall (2011) determines that her participants suffer

from a lack of confidence as writers, which manifests itself in difficulty in engaging in revision or with peer feedback (pp. 418-420). Like Bloom (1981) and Onwuegbuzie (1998), Cotterall (2011) identifies the need for increased clarity of communication; however, Cotterall also forwards the need to encourage a view of “writing as a practice” (p. 423) for multilingual graduate student writers, believing that such an orientation would reduce writers’ feelings of lack of self-confidence.

Of note here is that while the above studies consider writing anxiety and writing difficulty as it is experienced by graduate student writers, no one has yet considered the effect that self-compassion has on these writers’ experiences (where self-compassion is the ability of the writer to recognize their anxiety and difficulty and “meet it with kindness, empathy, equanimity, and patience”) (Feldman and Kuyken, 2011, p. 145). Though a practice of self-compassion could be an important first step in countering some of the more persistent and problematic threads in the narrative of graduate study (including a lack of self-care and debilitating mental illness) (Pyrall, 2016; Vitale, 2016), this research project was the first attempt in Composition scholarship to connect graduate student writers’ management of writing anxiety with a practice of self-compassion.

Writers’ ability to self-monitor and –regulate. As is discussed above, existing scholarship that examines graduate student writers’ ability to self-monitor and self-regulate as they compose is limited and only Castelló, Iñesta, and Monereo’s (2009) study of Spanish graduate student writers offers insights extends the scope of the current study. Concerned with examining their participants’ abilities to negotiate the often complex problem of navigating the academic writing process, their own feelings about said process, and revising based on committee feedback (Castelló, Iñesta, & Monereo, 2009, p. 1108), the researchers found that

graduate students writers are better able to regulate and manage their own writing processes when (1) they are able to make explicit connections between “their difficulties” and “explicit solutions and strategies” and (2) they perceive that “making their voice visible” is a valued part of the writing and revision processes (p. 1108).

Similar to the caveat discussed at the close of the previous sub-section, there seems to be a significant gap in what we in Composition yet know about how the composing processes of advanced academic writers are impacted by a practice of self-compassion. The significance of this gap lies in the support that we might give our advanced academic writers if we but knew we should; that is, as Onwuegbuzie (1998) identifies above, we cannot offer advanced academic writers productive writing and emotional support due to the simple and complicating fact that *we do not yet know enough* about their writing anxieties, difficulties, and processes.

Existing Models of Graduate Writer Support

Despite the difficult current reality surrounding what we in Composition (and, by extension, Writing Across the Curriculum) do and do not know about the composing practices of advanced academic writers, current Composition and WAC models for supporting these writers abound. Models of advanced academic writer support fall under three major categories: the academic apprenticeship model; institutionally-supported graduate student writing groups; and training and workshop services that approach dissertation writing from a “rhetorical, genre-based” perspective (Autry & Carter, 2015).

Academic apprenticeship model. The first, and arguably most longstanding (Berkenkotter et al., 1988; Belcher, 1994) and widely used, model of formalized support for advanced academic writers is the academic apprenticeship model, which is most commonly operationalized through a system of graduate student writer-faculty mentoring and which is

ubiquitous at both the course work and dissertation-writing stages of doctoral study. Though stemming from different impetuses and extending in different theoretical directions, the goal of all of the scholarship discussed in this section remains the same: to support graduate student writers' acquisition of the literacies and rhetorical moves necessary to become successful doctoral students and writers in their respective disciplines.

In their study of the use of graduate student writer-faculty mentoring as a means of acculturating graduate students into the literacy requirements (Berkenkotter et al., 1988) of a graduate academic discourse community, Noll and Fox (2003) examine the attitudes and perceptions about advanced academic writing held by students in their own graduate seminars, seeking particularly students' perceptions of the moves that could be made by mentoring faculty to best meet their own "understandings and needs" (p. 334). When asked to describe their feelings about the requirements of academic writing, Noll and Fox's (2003) participants echoed the anxiety expressed by participants in Bloom's (1981) study: "'Scary,' 'prescriptive,' 'formulaic,' 'confining,' 'frustrating,' 'taming,' 'drab,' and 'painful.'" (p. 335). Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, Noll and Fox's (2003) findings are consistent with the conclusions of others who have examined how best to meet the needs of advanced academic writers, particularly those of Bloom (1981), when they conclude that faculty mentors can best support the writing processes of their advanced academic writers by "listening closely to graduate students' perceptions of academic writing" and allowing both graduate coursework and the mentoring relationship to serve as a testing ground for those perceptions, where they may be interrogated and extended (p. 342). Unaddressed, however, is the question how to handle advanced academic writers' negative perceptions and attitudes toward their own high stakes writing endeavors; similar to Bloom (1981) and Onwuegbuzie (1998), Noll and Fox (2003) stop short of making recommendations

for how best to encourage and support advanced academic writers' healthful and compassionate stance toward their own writing. Indeed, unlike the Composition scholars discussed in Chapter 2, Noll and Fox (2003) resist a consideration of why the assumption of negative perceptions and attitudes toward academic writing could have lasting damage on academic writers' writing processes. And while it is possible that such an orientation simply is not widely practiced in Composition currently, this research project identified it as a shortcoming that it hoped to bridge.

Turning to the context of multilingual or non-native English speakers¹, Li (2007) examines the experiences of a student pursuing doctoral study in chemistry in a “non-Anglophone context” (p. 55). While Li (2007) finds that her participant, Yuan, benefits from a system of “textual mentoring,” whereby the participant models their writing of a particularly difficult section of analysis on an existing, published approach (p. 67), the more relevant finding for this research project is the interaction of Li and Yuan. A professor and literacy researcher, Li details in a footnote that when communicating with Yuan, she

responded in English rather than in Chinese (my and my students' native tongue) because I try to provide a role model and motivation for students to communicate in English. Over the years, I have usually corresponded with my students (for teaching and research purposes) via emails and online exchanges in English rather than Chinese. I had the same awareness of my professional role in the present study. (2007, p. 60)

Throughout her discussion, Li (2007) notes that though she is “careful not to interfere with Yuan's writing process,” she nonetheless shares resources with Yuan that may help him when he appears to struggle (p. 61). And though Li (2007) accurately identifies Yuan's use of these resources as textual mentoring, she fails to recognize *her own* mentoring of Yuan through her modeling of both her use of English when communicating² and her recommendation of turning

to existing scholarship when writing becomes stalled. This implicit model of mentoring deeply informed this research project in its approach to modeling and practicing *alongside* participants, both by recommendation and by observable practice.

Similar to Li's (2007) experience with her research participant, Turner and Edwards (2006) take a narrativized approach to examining their own experiences, first as faculty-mentored graduate student writers and later as mentor-mentee. Considering the sum of their experiences, Turner and Edwards (2006) conclude that there are three vital components to a productive mentor-mentee relationship at the doctoral level: the nature of the writing discussed, the sharing of access to academic discourse conventions, and the privileging of authentic voices within the relationship (pp. 174-176). First, a healthy and productive mentor-mentee relationship must be equally (or at least, mostly) participatory; both mentor *and* mentees' own academic writing should be valued and discussed. Second, consistent with the theoretical underpinning of Noll and Fox (2003), a productive mentor-mentee relationship must involve the provision of "access to the conventions and discourses of academic writing" by the mentor to the mentee (p. 175). Finally, as discussed similarly in Castelló, Iñesta, and Monereo (2009), mentee's own "personal voices and interests" must be an "honored" (p. 176) part of the writing and mentoring process. Turner and Edwards (2006) conclude by directly echoing Noll and Fox's (2003) (and indirectly Bloom's (1981)) call for graduate faculty to ground their mentoring of advanced academic writers in a clearer understanding of mentees own perceptions about the academic writing process (p. 176); an understanding that this research project sought to expand by investigating advanced academic writers' explicit and implicit responses to mindfulness strategies that supported their efficacy, productivity, and anxiety.

Institutionally-supported writing groups. The second model for the support of advanced academic writers' composing practices is the writing group, an institutionally-supported (either through funding or faculty sponsorship) regular gathering 'of graduate students for graduate students' that is designed to support, rather than enforce, the norms and conventions of doctoral-level academic writing. For the purposes of the present research project, it was important to understand this method as one that is governed and attended almost exclusively by graduate students, rather than one that is more centrally dependent upon or regulated by faculty (as is true of the academic apprenticeship model discussed above); while faculty-led writing groups do occur, they tend to arise as an outgrowth of an existing mentoring relationship and thus exist under the heading of the academic apprenticeship model.

Responding to the abundance of scholarship on writing groups geared toward faculty writers, Cuthbert and Spark (2008) examine the impact of implementing and supporting a graduate student-only writing group, Graduate Students in Print (GRiP) (p. 80). Conducted as a graduate level-iteration of the peer review- and workshop-style undergraduate Composition pedagogy ultimately articulated by Hurlbert (2012), participants in GRiP met throughout the academic year to read, respond to, and revise drafts of field-specific writing with the observable outcomes of "demystifying" the publication process, offering practice with "writing for a (field-)specific audience," and encouraging an environment of "support versus pressure" (Cuthbert & Spark, 2008, p. 77). By the end of the nine-month process of workshopping, twenty-five of the twenty-six participants had "drafted an article for eventual publication in a refereed journal" (Cuthbert and Spark, 2008, p. 82), leading the researchers to conclude that participation in the GRiP writing group "allowed graduate students to achieve the crucial academic professional attainment of publication within a pedagogic structure" (p. 87). It is important to note that while

the present research project was not focused on graduate publications, but rather on the dissertation process, Cuthbert and Spark's (2008) findings suggest that a writing group initiated by graduate students for the specific benefit of graduate students can result in valuable, concrete, and achievable outcomes.

Building upon the momentum of Cuthbert and Spark's (2008) findings, Maher et al. (2008) examine the graduate student writing group model from the perspective of graduate student writers themselves (at the time of writing, all of the contributing authors were graduate students and members of the discussed writing groups) (p. 263). The writing groups presented and examined by Maher et al. (2008) were designed by graduate students with the "explicit purpose of assisting research students to complete the writing of their doctoral dissertations and to come to understand how to work effectively with, and on, writing" (p. 264) at the doctoral level. Maher et al. (2008) discovered within the writing groups a dominant thread of "peer learning" and peer review style knowledge making (p. 265) consistent with the findings of Cuthbert and Spark (2008), concluding that the field-specific discursive practices inherent in writing groups facilitated a growth of "knowledge of the (dissertation) writing process" (p. 269) which might otherwise have been achieved less quickly and with less ease. Maher et al. (2008) note that writing group participants grew "more confident in communicating ideas" (p. 269) as the group continued to expose itself to field- and genre-specific language, eventually developing "a shared metalanguage" (p. 274) about the conventions and processes involved in academic writing. The development of *a shared metalanguage* was particularly notable for the present research project as it attempted to encourage a metalanguage of awareness, self-monitoring, and self-compassion in its advanced academic writer participants.

Building upon and extending the scholarship of Maher et al. (2008), Lassig, Dillon, and

Diezmann (2013) examine the impact of graduate student writing group participation on the development of writers' "scholarly identities" as "expert writers" from the "situated learning perspective" (p. 299) of the graduate student writers themselves (in this case, Lassig and Dillon were Education graduate students in the writing group and Diezmann was a supervising faculty member). The present research project benefitted particularly from Lassig, Dillon, and Diezmann's (2013) findings that, while working around the core question of how participating in the writing group "has influenced you as a writer" (p. 304), the "mutual engagement" (p. 305) inherent in the culture of the writing group fosters writers' self-efficacy (p. 306) and self-awareness (p. 309). These outcomes of self-efficacy and self-awareness were supportive of the goals of the present research project.

Rhetorical- and genre-based workshop services. An outlier in any discussion of models of support for advanced academic writers are approaches that stem from rhetorical genre studies (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010), whereby models are based on supporting advanced academic writers' understandings of and abilities to engage with the genre expectations and conventions of their respective fields of study. Autry and Carter's (2015) examination of Thesis and Dissertation Support Services (TDSS) at North Carolina State University builds on the awarenesses fostered by Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman (1991) of the socially constructed nature of graduate student writing. Designed in part as a response to the rise of university-sponsored dissertation boot camps (discussed below), which Autry and Carter (2015) identify as relying on existing "implicit or explicit genre knowledge" (n.p.), TDSS's focus on providing "students with an understanding of both the formal and informal genres of graduate study" (n.p.) begins all participants on the same foundational level on which they will build genre knowledge. Additionally, unlike the above models of support (whose emphasis is on working with graduate

student writers in an individual or group setting within academic programs or departments), TDSS responds directly to the present crisis of graduate student attrition as an initiative designed with explicitly genre-oriented purposes: to “improve the quality of the work, increase degree completion rates, reduce time to degree, and, above all, develop life-long scholarly writers who are prepared to undertake the writing necessary to be successful in their careers” (Autry & Carter, 2015, n.p.). The existence of a program of this kind provided a wide-reaching foundation for the present research project’s concern with offering practices that improve the self-efficacy, writing anxiety, and self-compassion of advanced academic writers and that, additionally, fostered attitudes that were consistent with and replicable for writers’ futures as healthy and productive faculty members.

Dissertation boot camp. Finally, universities have responded to the crisis of attrition with an upswing in offers of dissertation boot camp programs, or, regular weekly, monthly, or lengthy retreat-style “quiet spaces” (Princeton University, 2016, n.p.) which promise to help graduate writers to “jump start (the) dissertation writing process” (Carnegie Mellon University, 2016, n.p.), “become more productive writers” (Cornell University, 2016, n.p.), and “make serious progress on (the) dissertation” (Stanford University, 2016, n.p.). These rhetorical genre studies-based programs function as an alternative to TDSS-style services (discussed above), operating for finite periods and with fixed, explicit goals and offering either “Just Write” or “Writing Process” style support (Lee and Golde, 2013, p. 2). However, there are two main difficulties with such an approach: (1) these intervention programs employ contradictory language to achieve their goals; (2) these interventions are housed *outside* of English departments generally and Composition programs specifically, which are the spaces where empirically-based methods for supporting graduate students’ writerly needs should begin.

In terms of employing contradictory language, terming an intervention a “boot camp” brings to mind drill sergeants, yelling, and militaristic confrontation, which are altogether inconsistent with the promised quiet writing time and focused help with navigating the writing process. While the boot camp approach is widespread and participants have reported positive responses to both the “focused environment” and “social dimension” (Starfield, 2016, p. 193), the militaristic framing is problematic; in order to support lastingly healthy and self-aware writing practices, an intervention program that presented an alternative of positive, consistent language and that fostered writers’ own efficacy, self-monitoring, and self-regulating was required.

Similarly, the housing of university-wide writing intervention programs outside the English department generally and Composition programs specifically was problematic in terms of consistency. In the case of the boot camp programs discussed above, the Princeton program is housed in the Hume Center for Writing and Speaking, the Carnegie Mellon program is housed within their College of Engineering and designed to service engineering doctoral candidates, and the Cornell and Stanford programs are sponsored by their graduate schools; the scattering of these programs, as well as their philosophical and physical distance from Composition faculty, deprives participants from the very real support that can be offered by professor/mentors who, at the very least, may adapt their wide and varied experiences with undergraduate and at-risk writers in the service of graduate student writers. In a best-case scenario, a university-wide writing intervention program housed within the English department (or, better, within a Composition program or as part of a WAC initiative), would offer participants a greater possibility of benefitting from Writing faculty who can meaningfully support the management of writing anxiety and writing difficulty.

Conclusion: A “Systematic Approach” to Assessing Effectiveness

Though the above are notable and important efforts toward understanding the needs and ways to support advanced academic writers, there are as yet limited “systematic” (Rose & McClafferty, 2001, p. 27) approaches for supporting the needs of these writers when they are engaged in high stakes writing projects. (Of the above publications, only Autry and Carter’s (2015) study considers the effectiveness of a large-scale program; even then, their self-assessment mechanism is in its earliest stages of operation and relies entirely upon the feedback of student participants (n.p.).) This shortage of empirically-supported, systematic approaches highlighted the need for empirical research in Composition on how the implementation of a validated and well-researched practice could improve the self-monitoring, self-efficacy, self-compassion, and writing production of advanced academic writers and could begin to bridge the gap between what we know about how best to support these writers and means of countering the current crisis of attrition.

Over the next chapters, this research explores the ways in which mindfulness intervention was employed to both successfully support the writing practices of advanced academic writers engaged in high stakes writing projects and as a program that assessed its own effectiveness (where “advanced academic writers” were doctoral students at the dissertation stage whose writerly needs stemmed from the highly stressful nature of pursuing dissertation-related writing projects) (Belcher, 1994; Pederson, 2010). In effect, this research project operationalized O’Reilly’s 1998 call for the creation of emotionally healthy and spiritually supportive academic environments by investigating the extent to which participation in a program of mindfulness intervention supported the “present-centered,” “non-judgmental,” and self-compassionate writing habits of advanced writers (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 6). Specifically, this research

project was guided by the following questions:

1. To what extent did participating in a four-week program of mindfulness intervention improve the self-efficacy, writing anxiety, and self-compassion of advanced academic writers?
 - a. How did practicing the present-centered, non-judgmental stance encouraged by a program of mindfulness intervention impact the writing production of advanced academic writers?
 - b. How did practicing the self-awareness and self-monitoring encouraged by a program of mindfulness intervention impact advanced academic writers' perceptions of their ability to carry these new practices into their future lives as healthy and productive faculty members?

In order to pursue these lines of inquiry, the chapters in this dissertation are arranged with a funnel-down approach where broader field- and discipline-specific concerns are addressed before the more specific concerns of this research project (for example, trends in existing scholarship precede a discussion of the need for scholarship on intervention programs that assess their own effectiveness). Within each of the following chapters, content is organized largely thematically in order to move through the major theories and thinkers that inform this research in an orderly and respectful fashion. Chapter 1 grounds this research as a going Composition concern; it is based in existing Composition literature, and details trends in existing scholarship that examines graduate student writing practices, examines models of graduate writer support both at the programmatic- and university-levels, and considers the need for empirically-supported, systematic approaches to graduate student writer support in order to highlight and reinforce the need for research of the kind proposed by the present project. Chapter 2 traces the history of mindfulness intervention in

North American medical, secular, and academic cultures (both generally and in Composition pedagogy) in order to forward mindfulness intervention as a viable, fully historicized method of support that is easily adapted for an audience of advanced academic writers. Chapter 3 grounds the methodology of this research in two fields (Composition and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction) and details the intervention design and method of data collection, as well as discusses the ways in which the intervention proposed herein is (and clearly lends itself to) an assessment of its own effectiveness. Chapters 4 and 5 are paired chapters; Chapter 4 presents and examines the trends and patterns that were present in the quantitative data collected in the study and explores the effectiveness of the program of mindfulness intervention implemented in this study, while Chapter 5 more closely considers key characteristics that appeared in the qualitative data and recommends revisions to the program of mindfulness intervention. Chapter 6 concludes the discussion by forwarding evidence-based implications and recommendations for the field of Composition and at the programmatic level, as well as by outlining the philosophical, material, and practical considerations for adapting the program of mindfulness intervention to support academic writers in a variety of contexts.

CHAPTER 2

TRACKING MINDFULNESS INTERVENTIONS IN NORTH AMERICAN MEDICAL AND ACADEMIC COMMUNITIES

Introduction

One possibility that both supports the high stakes writing practices of advanced academic writers and invites a systematic study its own effectiveness can be found through mindfulness practice. In this chapter, I track organized or formal mindfulness interventions in key areas of North American society, beginning with Kabat-Zinn's timely pioneering of mindfulness-based stress reduction at what would eventually become the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, and follow with an exploration of the extension (by others) of Kabat-Zinn's efforts further into both the medical fields and secularized social practice. I then shift my focus to the more familiar realm of the university; I review mindfulness initiatives that already exist in both academia generally and in Composition pedagogy more specifically, and, finally, explicate the ways in which mindfulness practices and interventions can support the high stakes writing practices of advanced academic writers.

As above, the sections in this chapter are developed using a funnel-down approach that journeys from broader histories of mindfulness interventions in medicine and secular society to narrower accounts of mindfulness interventions existing in academia. The final section, in which I explicitly forward mindfulness intervention as a viable means of support for advanced writers, is built around an "operational definition" (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 291) of mindfulness practice, an exploration of the ways in which an intervention of this kind would bridge the gap that exists in how we understand how to support the writing processes of advanced academic writers, and a discussion of the ethical component of this kind of intervention. Owing to the largely linear

record of their development, the medically-oriented interventions detailed in the first two sections are organized chronologically. Conversely, due to their relatively contemporaneous development, the mindfulness initiatives that already exist in academia are arranged thematically based on their methods of intervention and stated goals. By delving into the well-documented history of mindfulness interventions in North America in these ways, I ultimately forward mindfulness intervention as a well-grounded, historicized method of supporting and reducing the suffering of participants; in this case, advanced academic writers who were engaged in high stakes writing projects.

For the purposes of this research project, a mindful orientation or worldview is one that is present-centered, non-judgmental, and observes with compassionate awareness; thus a practitioner of mindfulness is awake to thoughts and sensations that are presently occurring and approaches those thoughts and sensations without (or with a minimum of) self-judgment. As is discussed below, this orientation often leads to a practice of letting go of outcomes and a sharpened attention to instincts and intuition. And though it may at first seem to be a permissive or passive state, mindfulness is fully the opposite; practicing mindfulness requires active awareness of and engagement with texture, sensation, thought, desire, impulse, response, and reaction. It was for these reasons that a program of mindfulness intervention was proposed here to support the high stakes writing endeavors of advanced academic writers; mindfulness practice enabled participants to view their anxieties as the potentially transient blockages that they could be, helped them to clear the mental space to observe helpful and unproductive behaviors, and supported their own ability to heal and guide themselves.

Kabat-Zinn and MBSR: An Historicized Practice

In 1979, while on a meditation retreat at the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, Kabat-Zinn experienced what he has since termed a “vision” (2011, p. 287) of the potentials of mindfulness intervention in the West. Though of very brief duration, this mental imagining “was rich in detail and more like an instantaneous seeing of vivid, almost inevitable connections and their implications” (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 287), which he then explored further:

Why not try to make meditation so commonsensical that anyone would be drawn to it?

Why not develop an American vocabulary that spoke to the heart of the matter, and didn’t focus on the cultural aspects of the traditions out of which the dharma emerged, however beautiful they might be...? This was not because they weren’t ultimately important, but because they would likely cause unnecessary impediments for people who were basically dealing with suffering and seeking some kind of release from it. (p. 287-288)

Already a practicing clinical psychiatrist at the newly-instituted University of Massachusetts Medical School, Kabat-Zinn envisioned a way to “recontextualize” (2011, p. 288) an ancient practice in a new, Western, medical context in the service of patients whose suffering was not being improved by more traditional Western therapies of drug and procedure-based interventions. Additionally, as a follower of traditional Buddhist philosophy, Kabat-Zinn was also keenly aware of the concept of *dukkha*, or, the internalization of stress or suffering (2011, 288). And so to answer the question of where to situate this new initiative, Kabat-Zinn naturally turned to his own context as, “after all, hospitals do function as ‘dukkha magnets’ in our society, pulling for stress, pain of all kinds, disease and illness, especially when they have reached levels where it is impossible to ignore them” (2011, p. 288).

In order to implement this intervention, Kabat-Zinn began by rejoining his immediate community and sharing his vision with the directors of adjacent medical clinics (those of primary care, pain, and orthopedics) and discovered that, by the directors' counts, "the percentage of their patients they felt able to help was...typically 10-20%" (2011, p. 293). In order to attempt to care for the unmet needs of the remaining 80-90% of patients, Kabat-Zinn developed an approach that involved both yoga and "relatively intensive training in Buddhist meditation without the Buddhism" (2011, p. 294). Created under the umbrella of the hospital's ambulatory care unit and with the endorsement of the initial three clinic directors, Kabat-Zinn's program would be an eight-week intervention during which participants would gain experience with a stable core of mindful and meditative practices, (2011, p. 194) and to which patients would gain access via a referral from their primary hospital physician. For Kabat-Zinn and the other clinic directors, this new initiative would represent a real way of catching up patients who were otherwise "falling through the cracks of the healthcare system," those who were, for what ever reason, "not responding to their (original) treatments" (2011, p. 194). Within a year of its launch, as a result of positive patient feedback and physician findings, Kabat-Zinn's initiative was invited to join the hospital's mainstream offerings under the name Stress Reduction and Relaxation Program (2011, p. 294 and 286).

Though the name of the program has changed to reflect shifting understandings of the links between mindfulness practice, stress reduction, and holistic wellbeing (it is now called the Center for Mindfulness), the practical methods of the program are little altered with a core approach of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 3). In practical terms, Kabat-Zinn's intervention program "would teach (patients) to take better care of themselves" (2011, p. 293) by being more aware "of the present moment and (accepting)

things as they are, however they are in actuality, rather than a preoccupation with attaining a particular desired outcome at some future time, no matter how desirable it might be” (2011, p. 290). For Kabat-Zinn (2011):

MBSR is grounded altogether in a non-fixing orientation and approach. It is less about *curing* and more about *healing*, which I define as *a coming to terms with things as they are* in full awareness. We often see that healing takes place on its own over time as we align ourselves with what is deepest and best in ourselves and rest in awareness moment by moment without an attachment to outcome. Or, alternatively and in all probability, seeing and not judging, to whatever degree possible, how strongly we are attached to a particular outcome, and then bringing that quality of awareness into all aspects of our lives...as best we can. (p. 292-293, emphasis in original)

Through this approach, participants in Kabat-Zinn’s intervention would, in effect, heal themselves through a combination of yoga and breathing exercises that would “invite” them to “participate in (their) own movement toward greater levels of health and wellbeing” (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 293). Kabat-Zinn’s intention of empowering participants is unmistakable.

Finally, the evident privileging of an awareness of things *as they are, in the present moment* is emblematic of Kabat-Zinn’s operationalization of one of the most traditional conceptions of mindful practice: “present-centered, non-judgmental awareness” (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 6). Of particular note here is Kabat-Zinn’s preference to undertake “operational” (2011, p. 291), rather than static, definitions of mindfulness, which necessarily shift “depending on the context” (2011, p. 291). This fluidity and lack of “definitive statements” (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 291) is, in fact, reflective not just of Kabat-Zinn’s own prescience that patients would fare better if guided by an “instrumental and operational *emphasis*” (2011, p. 291,

emphasis mine) rather than a strict code of conduct, but can also be seen as a principle that is directly rooted in more traditional Eastern Buddhist philosophy. In his seminal text *Being Peace*, Hanh (1987) identifies as one of the core mindfulness trainings that of “non-attachment from views,” or, an avoidance of being “narrow-minded and bound to present views” because “the knowledge we possess is not changeless” and “truth is found” actively through the living of life (p. 92). It is useful here to note the working definition of *Buddhist meditative practices* offered by Williams and Kabat-Zinn (2011) as a philosophical underpinning for both Kabat-Zinn’s intervention and those that would follow, that these are “universal” practices “concerned with embodied awareness and the cultivation of clarity, emotional balance (equanimity) and compassion” (p. 3). The crux of this philosophical underpinning is fuller awareness, rather than the “bare attention” (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 15) that would only notice without reflection or compassionate self-investigation.

Extensions of MBSR

Following Kabat-Zinn’s introduction of MBSR into the University of Massachusetts’s Medical School, a great number of mindfulness-based programs were adapted to meet both the evolving medical needs and the secular wellness interests of Western culture. A common thread among these adaptations is the underlying authenticity to Kabat-Zinn’s (2011) vision of practices that would alleviate suffering, increase awareness, and foster self-healing.

MBCT and associated clinical interventions. Kabat-Zinn’s timely pioneering of MBSR prompted a number of parallel and subsequent clinical programs intent on deploying Zen Buddhist-inspired mindfulness practices to alleviate the suffering of patients, beginning with the development of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) in the 1990s (Fennell & Segal, 2011) and extending to mindfulness-based relapse prevention (MBRP), mindfulness-based

childbirth and parenting (MBCP), and mindfulness-based elder care (MBEC) (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, 284). In terms of mindfulness approaches to the management of specific diseases, present day mindfulness intervention programs currently in existence are designed to reduce the suffering of patients faced with Parkinson's disease (Fitzpatrick, Simpson, & Smith, 2010), breast cancer (Visser, Witte, Speckens, Prins & van Laarhoven, 2015), neurodegeneration (Sapozhnikov, 2015), and eating disorders (Marchiori & Papies, 2011), to name but a few. These iterations and intervention programs share three main characteristics: (1) all stem from the medical components (though not necessarily the spiritual components) of Kabat-Zinn's MBSR program; (2) due to the empirically-based nature of Western medicine, all are additionally concerned with their own effectiveness.

Secular outgrowths of MBSR. Further, in the 36 years since Kabat-Zinn's initial introduction of mindfulness intervention into Western medical philosophy, mindfulness practice has spread throughout secular Western society, finding additional niches in nonmedical wellness communities, as can be seen in the many varieties and sheer number of yoga, meditation, and mindfulness circles that have sprouted in urban and suburban environments. (Though no known count of these circles exists, it is expected to be easily in the thousands in the United States alone.) Further, interest in holistic wellness has led to an appreciable surge in whole and healthful food stores; where in previous decades, "health food stores" were considered fringe shops, the last decade and a half has seen the integration of Whole Foods, local and farmers' markets, and co-operatives into mainstream consumer markets.

Interestingly, the still-increasing secular interest in mindfulness has given rise to a culturally-accepted ethos of mindful living that invariably involves some combination of an ethical, whole, or plant-based diet, conscious consumerism, ecologically-conscious travel, and a

practice of self-care. Of particular note and as is discussed below (“Facilitator ethos”), the current iteration of this ethos has very specific implications for those individuals self-identifying as female; a natural appearance (where the use of makeup is optional at best, and often not worn at all), natural fabrics, the ubiquitous reusable water bottle, a personal yoga practice and/or semi-secular meditation practice, and fashion that privileges comfort and functionality over hauteness have become de rigueur. In many ways, this ethos disrupts traditional contemporary notions of femininity by placing primary concern on personal comfort, authentic representation, physical and emotional wellness, and whole living (thus shifting away in significant ways from performance for public consumption). In other ways, this ethos arguably returns to more historicized conceptions of the sacred feminine. And though the impact of this evolving and potentially contradictory ethos on perceptions and practices of mindfulness in secular Western culture is as yet unclear, it offered interesting possibilities for a female instantiation of mindfulness in academic contexts (“Facilitator ethos”).

Existing Mindfulness Initiatives in Academia

The spread of mindfulness practice as one that supports mental and physical well-being has had somewhat limited, albeit interesting, iterations in the environment of higher education in the last ten years. Existing largely in pockets or outposts of extracurricular practice and functioning as an implementation of MBSR-based findings concerning the ability of mindfulness practice to mitigate stress and emotional suffering, a small number of universities across North America have instituted programs at varying levels of university-sponsorship that are designed to support the emotional and physical health of participants. Though these programs and initiatives differ in terms of funding (programs range from grassroots to systematic), cost, and participation, they share the goal of improving participants’ experiences and wellness. Additionally, these

programs are on the rise; though un-quantified and largely un-assessed, we have seen an increase in mindfulness support programs across educational contexts (though this increase may also be in response to recent surges in the violence that have been seen in academic environments).

On-campus and online “clearinghouse” models of mindfulness trainings. The first type or generalized category of mindfulness initiatives already existing in academia are on-campus or on-line communities that function as a sort of clearinghouse of mindfulness options to support student and faculty needs, with the goal of providing participants with training opportunities. As the term suggests, these communities have assembled existing resources and offer links to online podcasts and websites, and often provide interested faculty members with in-house mindfulness workshops. Additionally, in the case of the first two programs discussed below, the campus presences also host externally-developed mindfulness intervention programs.

Indiana University of Pennsylvania’s Mindfulness Living Learning Community, housed in IUP’s Center for Health and Wellbeing, is a community of interested faculty members who have brought together a number of practical-in-daily-use mindfulness trainings and tools for both students and university faculty. While a significant portion of this outreach is located online (resources include links for meditation applications, websites, podcasts, and print sources for both students and educators), members of the university can request outreach programs that are facilitated by faculty members associated with the Community (Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2016b). IUP’s Mindfulness Living Learning Community also hosts the KORU Mindfulness program. Developed by Duke University’s student counseling center, the KORU Mindfulness program is an intervention program that is “designed to teach mindfulness and meditation skills” (Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2016a) through a series of once-weekly, guided workshops. Much as exists in yoga studios across the country, KORU workshops are led

by members of the community who have completed the KORU training program and have been certified through their mindfulness, meditation, and facilitator training (The Center for KORU Mindfulness, 2016). Participation in the KORU Mindfulness program workshops is voluntary, free, and open to the entire academic community, with special workshops offered specifically for graduate students. As is discussed below, though it constitutes a valuable move toward supporting students' mindfulness practices, the KORU Mindfulness program has undergone only limited assessment of its effect on general wellness, and has received no assessment concerning participants' writing or scholarly productivity.

The University of British Columbia Human Resources department is another such compendium of mindfulness resources. In addition to a newsletter in which mindfulness resources and meditation-centric articles are regularly featured, UBC's Human Resources department also hosts a 30 Day Mindfulness Challenge, an "online training program" (Human Resources, 2016) for faculty and staff of the University that promises to show improvements in participants personal and professional lives. As with the KORU Mindfulness Challenge, the 30 Day Mindfulness Challenge is actually an outside-designed program that the university is hosting – the original challenge was developed by MindWell, a corporation concerned with spreading mindfulness practice throughout secular society (MindWell, 2016).

Housed within the Graham Health Center, Oakland University's iPause program encourages participants to "Be Well" with the stated goal of helping visitors to "be less reactive to the stressors" (Oakland University, 2016b) in their lives. The program has a well-detailed online presence, with online information organized into two major categories: A list of potential stressors (Time Management, Test Anxiety, Purpose, Money, Relationships, Health) and a list of potential methods of coping and management (Become Self-Aware, Self-Regulate, Get

Motivated, Develop Empathy, Practice Kindness, Be Mindful) (Oakland University, 2016b). Like Indiana University of Pennsylvania's initiative, this program brings together mindfulness resources for students and faculty; clicking on any of the individual stressors or coping and management options leads online visitors to explanations of the concept, an action plan, a brief list of "Takeaways," and often even useful applications for personal electronic devices or an associated TED talk (Oakland University, 2016a; Oakland University, 2016c). Also similar to Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Community, university members can request iPause workshops for their classes, during which experienced facilitators from the program make classroom visits to conduct workshops of particular necessary aspects of wellness (Oakland University, 2016b). However, unlike the previous two programs, the iPause program is neither affiliated with nor hosts any externally-developed intervention programs.

Housed in medical centers. The second type or generalized category of mindfulness initiatives already existing in academia are mindfulness centers and programs that exist *within* larger extant medical apparatus. This is to say that the programs and centers in this category represent intervention initiatives that are housed in university medical centers and that work in conjunction with more mainstream drug and procedure-based interventions, with a key characteristic of existing as a center of knowledge where those in need seek out help from those who, due to their social standing as physicians or specialists, are deemed experts. These programs and centers are MBSR in nature, offering participants a series of workshops, courses, and resources that are designed to tackle issues ranging from mindful eating and compassion (UC San Diego Health 2016a) to mindfulness in health care (Penn Medicine, 2016). All of the programs and centers included in this category operate at a cost and all people wishing to participate in a workshop or intervention course must pay for their participation. Further, unlike

the programs discussed above, the first two initiatives detailed in this section function largely in the “real world;” their on-line presences are bases for advertising, registering, and recruiting for their intervention programs only. The final initiative is an outlier in this category for many reasons: its significant online presence, interdisciplinarity, and fellowship program.

The University of California, San Diego’s Center for Mindfulness is housed in the UC San Diego Health system and sponsors MBSR-style intervention programs and trainings, with a stated goal of providing a “multi-faceted program” designed to “further the practice and integration of mindfulness into all aspects of society” (UC San Diego Health, 2016a). While the Center makes a monthly workshop in “Mindfulness, Meditation, and Yoga” open to the public at a lower cost (\$20 per session) (UC San Diego Health, 2016c), participation in the Center’s intensive programs is limited to UCSD employees, faculty, and those licensed psychologists and nurses seeking continuing education, and costs for participation range from \$240 for the four-week “Heart of Mindfulness: An Introductory Program” to \$545 for the eight-week “Mindful Self Compassion” program (UC San Diego, 2016b). The fee for each intervention program covers the cost of both participation and a guiding workbook and completion of the introductory program is required as a prerequisite for pursuit of more advanced programs (UC San Diego Health, 2016b).

The Penn Program for Mindfulness, housed in the University of Pennsylvania’s Medical Center, is an initiative that offers participants the choice of workshops falling under four main categories: Foundational Mindfulness Courses, Advanced Mindfulness Courses, Training in Teaching Mindfulness, and Mindfulness in Healthcare (Penn Medicine, 2016b). The workshops vary in duration and intensity, ranging from a two-hour Introductory Workshop to four- and eight-week programs, meditation retreats, and a year-long program that is designed to support

experienced meditators in their spiritual journeys (Penn Medicine, 2016a; Penn Medicine, 2016d). Intervention programs are open to the public and, as above, they operate at a cost to participants, ranging from \$49 for the Introductory Workshop to \$569 for the eight-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Management course (Penn Medicine, 2016c). Unlike the other programs and centers appearing in this category, the Penn Program for Mindfulness has rebranded their training protocol, terming it “Mindfulness-Based Stress Management” rather than MBSR; however, the language included in the description of this approach is almost identical to the language that constitutes Kabat-Zinn’s publication on MBSR and so does not necessitate separate categorization (Penn Medicine, 2016a).

An outlier in this category of mindfulness initiatives, the University of California, Berkeley’s Greater Good Science Center is part of UC Berkeley’s Institute of Human Development. The Center is an interdisciplinary initiative whose “core themes” are “gratitude, altruism, compassion, empathy, forgiveness, happiness, and mindfulness” (The Greater Good Science Center, 2016a; The Greater Good Science Center, 2016d). The Center also sponsors a number of interdisciplinary workshops and lectures with physicians and specialists, which are open to the public at a relatively low cost (below \$70). On the Center’s website, the “Mindfulness” tab yields a compendium of mindfulness-related sources, studies, and speakers, and highlights Kabat-Zinn’s work in MBSR (The Greater Good Science Center, 2016c); the Center also publishes an interdisciplinary online magazine *Greater Good*, which frequently features mindfulness-centric pieces. The Center’s employment Kabat-Zinn’s MBSR-related language (without alteration or revision) is noticeable throughout the website and the online magazine. It is in the spirit of that interdisciplinarity and concern with mindfulness that the Center also offers a limited number of yearly research fellowships to undergraduate and graduate

students enrolled in UC Berkeley; these fellowships are awarded to proposals that investigate the social, biological and communal health aspects of wellness (The Greater Good Science Center, 2016a).

Of note is that while these initiatives have made significant inroads in initiating discussions of pedagogy- and general wellness-focused university support among faculty, staff, and, occasionally, students, only one of the initiatives detailed here has assessed its own effectiveness. As discussed in Greeson, Juberg, Maytan, James, and Rogers (2014), KORU has conducted an in-house assessment of their effectiveness and found impacts in the areas of perceived stress, sleep problems, increased mindfulness, and self-compassion of participants; however, effects of participation in a mindfulness intervention on participants' productivity has not been in any way assessed. Of additional note is that while some initiatives are open to graduate students, none of the initiatives deal specifically with supporting them, much less their writing practices, when they are engaged in high stakes writing projects.

Existing Models of Mindfulness-Based Writer Support in Composition Pedagogy

Over the last 15 years, there has emerged in Composition a new thread in the narrative of our pedagogy; scholarship has appeared that implements, reports on, or theorizes what have been variously termed mindfulness or contemplative practices in the writing classroom. Typically implemented at the undergraduate level, these practices range in nature from implicit pedagogies that invite students to observe themselves and reflect on their experiences to explicitly mindful or contemplative approaches that put student-writers' spiritual lives at the forefront of the learning experience.

Of note is that though all of the approaches discussed in this section deal explicitly and specifically with the Composition classroom and supporting undergraduate writers (and while

the tasks and objectives of writing at the undergraduate level differ markedly from the high stakes writing undertaken independently by doctoral student writers), it was important to understand and account for the inroads that had already been made in Composition in the areas of mindful writing and teaching, as they are some of the only efforts that have yet been made.

Implicit pedagogies of support. Of the published accounts by Composition scholars of their efforts to implicitly supporting writers' explorations of themselves and their own narratives, the works of Elbow (2000), Blitz and Hurlbert (1998), Hurlbert (2012), and Kroll (1992) are particularly notable for the attention paid to the contexts surrounding students' writing activities. Though the pedagogical moves undertaken in these accounts are indeed implicit, the attention paid to the need for hope (Elbow, 2000; Kroll, 1992) in the face of the overwhelming violence and apathy experienced by student writers (Blitz and Hurlbert, 1998; Hurlbert, 2012) is at the forefront of daily lessons, course projects, and writing assessment. The efforts of these scholars to reorient the Composition classroom as a space of safety and growth are, quite simply, heroic.

Explicitly mindfulness-based pedagogies. In addition to the many accounts of implicit pedagogies of support (discussed above), we have seen a small-but-steady stream of publications that forward explicitly contemplative or mindfulness-based pedagogies. Among these publications, O'Reilley's (1993) *A Peaceable Classroom* looms large over every publication that followed it; O'Reilley's attention to creating a classroom space that attends gently and explicitly to students' spiritual needs and voices marks her work as seminal in this field. Similarly, Kirsch's (2009; 2008) work to support her students' spirituality and inner lives and Kroll's (2013) effort to teach peace through argument continue O'Reilley's reinvention the Composition classroom as a space for present and gentle orientations toward writing that is at once interrogative, academic, and personal. Turning to the constitutive qualities of yoga, Buddhist

meditation, and more traditional conceptions of mindfulness, Wenger (2015) and Yagelski (2011) forward methods of anchoring daily classroom practice in breathing and meditative practices that encourage student writers to expand their view of what is possible through the act of writing.

Conclusion: Mindfulness Intervention as Support for Advanced Academic Writers

In the tradition of Kabat-Zinn (2011), the philosophical underpinning of this research project were rooted in an operational definition of mindfulness as a practice that privileged compassionate awareness of and existence in the present moment in a way that was without (or with as little as possible) judgment or attachment to outcomes (p. 291; p. 290). As with Williams and Kabat-Zinn (2011), the goal of employing an operational, rather than static, definition for this work was to maintain a focus on mindfulness as a *practice*, which necessarily brought to mind recursiveness, continual learning, and imperfection. These qualities were important for the intervention proposed by this research project; for participants to grow through their participation in this intervention, they had to be willing to view their relationship to their writing as a journey in which they explored both themselves and their subject, with all of the loops, wrong turns, and shortcuts such a metaphor promised. Further, following Kabat-Zinn's (2011, p. 291) example, an operational definition of mindfulness as a practice would gently and gradually reduce the impulse for perfection with which doctoral candidates struggle; like any sport or hobby, long writing journeys are rarely uneventful for very long, and it was important for participants to gradually release their clutching grasp on expected outcomes. In more concrete terms, anchoring this operational definition as the center of the proposed mindfulness intervention program was a move toward alleviating and easing the well-documented history that doctoral students have of struggling with a lack of self-care, mental illness, and emotional stagnation (Pyral, 2016; Vitale,

2016; Arnold, 2014) which are arguably some of the unexplored factors leading to high rates of doctoral student attrition (Gardner, 2008; Ehrenberg, Jakubson, Groen, So, & Price, 2007).

Bridging the Gap

Mindfulness intervention, as it is discussed above, was employed to support the writing practices of advance academic writers engaged in high stakes writing projects by:

1. Exposing writers to language through which to conceptualize and verbalize their writing-related struggles and anxieties, as well as the nuanced landscape of their self-compassion;
2. Training writers in more productive methods of working through uncertainty, disorganization, “dry spells,” and negative stances toward the self-as-writer;
3. Empowering writers to see themselves as more effective and productive across and throughout writing contexts.

An intervention of this kind began to fill three gaps in the field of Composition concerning what we know about graduate students. As is discussed in more depth in Chapter 3, this intervention illuminated some of the practices undertaken by individual graduate students when they engaged in high stakes writing projects by asking participants to report on both the practices themselves and their perceived efficacy for their writing productivity. On a programmatic level, the intervention proposed by this research provides a model for how graduate programs may validate writers’ struggles at the dissertation stage as very real and worthy of institutional support. (This is an important first step in increasing dissertation completion rates and reducing burnout, as well as equipping doctoral students with tools that would make them less likely to succumb to faculty burnout later in their careers.) In terms of the field of Composition, this research project increases what we know and understand about the

efficacy of mindfulness interventions when they are employed to support advanced academic writers' self-efficacy, productivity, and self-compassion.

A Final Note: Not to “Denature Out of Ignorance”

It was impossible to ignore, at any stage of planning the intervention proposed by this research, that the practices and orientations that are taken in our Western context as being constitutive of “mindfulness practice” were, in fact, merely pieces of a much larger and more ancient tradition. As noted by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2011), the term “mindfulness practice” as we understand it colloquially is actually just one part of *Satipatthana*, or, a complex and comprehensive Buddhist spiritual tradition that includes among its constituent parts being, awareness, “clear comprehension,” and “right” living (p. 19; p. 21). It was a deep concern of this research to not, in Williams and Kabat-Zinn’s (2011) phrase, “denature out of ignorance” (p. 1) or misapprehension these venerable and spiritually-impactful traditions in the quest for academic advancement, a broadening of field knowledge, or simply to complete a dissertation.

In exploring the ethical dimensions of facilitating mindfulness interventions in a Western medical context, Kabat-Zinn (2011) expresses a similar concern: “Are we ignoring that fundamental aspect of the Dharma in favour of just a few highly selected meditation techniques, again, decontextualizing elements of a coherent whole?” (p. 294). Expanding on these concerns, Williams and Kabat-Zinn (2011) identify the “potential problems” (p. 4) of a mindfulness intervention in this context:

Is there the potential for something priceless to be lost through secular applications of aspects of a larger culture which has a long and venerable, dare we say sacred tradition of its own? What are the potential negative effects of the confluence of these different

epistemologies at this point in time?...Can it be exploited or misappropriated in some ways that might lead to harm of some kind, either by omission or commission? (p. 4)

In the case of the intervention proposed by this research project, an additional and connected concern was that potential participants might seek out this intervention as a means of managing “the stress of ‘success’” (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 4), where ‘success’ was defined as measurable progress toward the completion of a doctoral degree that would be achieved through a productively written dissertation. Put another way, this additional and connected concern was that participants might enter into an intervention of Buddhist meditation-related practices in order to “get” something out of it, expecting their participation to lead to immediate, tangible results.

Intentions, intentions, intentions; and, letting go of the outcome. In order to confront these ethical concerns head-on, it was necessary to first return to Kabat-Zinn’s (2011) original intention in bringing the ancient and venerable practices of Buddhist meditation, mindfulness, and compassionate awareness to a Western, medical context. In describing the intention of MBSR, Kabat-Zinn (2011) states that it was “never meant to exploit, fragment, or decontextualize the dharma, but rather to *recontextualize* it within” (p. 288, emphasis in original) these new and current frameworks. Writing on this process of recontextualization, Williams and Kabat-Zinn (2011) note:

(I)t is therefore appropriate to introduce (these practices) into mainstream secular settings *in the service of helping to reduce suffering and the attendant mind-states and behaviors that compound it*, and to do so in ways that neither disregard nor disrespect the highly sophisticated and beautiful epistemological framework within which it is nested, but on

the contrary make profound use of that framework in non-parochial ways consistent with its essence. (p. 3, emphasis mine)

It was in this spirit of recontextualization that this research project set its intention; that this research maintained the value and commitments of Buddhist mindfulness tradition and that it did not appropriate it for means that were counter to or inconsistent with the original intentions of this tradition as they were translated by Kabat-Zinn, Williams, Bodhi, and others. This research project recontextualized the Buddhist practices of mindfulness, meditation, and awareness in the context of graduate writers at the dissertation stage with the intention of reducing the suffering that such an endeavor could engender in a population that would eventually be tasked with the education of future educators, healers, community members, and leaders. Subsequently, the intervention proposed by this research presented mindfulness-related concepts in the colloquial language that has been adopted by the secular yoga and meditation communities in an effort to, in Williams and Kabat-Zinn's (2011) term, make it "accessible to those who would not seek it out within a Buddhist context" (p. 5).

Finally, this research adopted the orientation encouraged by Hanh (1987) in his description of "non-attachment from views" (p. 92) and attempted to honor participants' intentions for their participation in the intervention. For if participants intended to derive productivity from their participation, and they felt this intention consciously and with awareness, then it would have been inconsistent of this research not to honor those intentions.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This research project sought to address the above gaps by implementing a four-week mindful writing intervention that was concerned with improving the writing anxieties, self-efficacy, self-compassion, and writing productivity of advanced academic writers across the disciplines who were engaged in high stakes writing projects. Kabat-Zinn (2011) defines this kind of intervention as a “radical act” (p. 297), this attempt to reduce suffering simultaneously on individual and group levels by reacquainting participants with their own “innate” ability to heal themselves and initiate their own growth (p. 293). Or, as O’Reilly (1993) eloquently notes, “most of the healing that goes on in (a writing context) (and maybe everywhere) is self healing. The teacher’s job is...to provide an atmosphere of safety and to keep out of the way of the process” (p. 47). In this chapter, I detail the ways I built a safe environment and, as O’Reilly (1993) suggests, got out of the way of writers’ processes, beginning with a discussion of the philosophical framework for and design of the proposed intervention, providing a description of the goals of the intervention as well as a schedule for the weekly sessions and an exploration of the nuances of the different component parts of sessions. I then discuss the expected participants in the proposed study, as well as the methods of soliciting their participation and my reasons for making this intervention program available to advanced academic writers across the disciplines (rather than solely in English or Composition). Following this, I explore the mixed methods that were used to collect data, the period of time during which data was collected, and the combined means of analyzing this data. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the ethical considerations and delimitations of a study of the kind proposed by the present project.

Intervention Design

Philosophical framework and intervention design. The design, intention, and philosophical underpinnings of this intervention were rooted in both the tradition of Kabat-Zinn (discussed above) and the philosophy of Hanh (1987):

Aware that life is only available in the present moment and that it is possible to live happily in the here and now, we are committed to training ourselves to live deeply each moment of daily life. We will try not to lose ourselves in dispersion or be carried away by regrets from the past, worries about the future, or craving, anger, or jealousy in the present. We will practice mindful breathing to come back to what is happening in the present moment. We are determined to learn the art of mindful living by touching the wonderful, refreshing, and healing elements that are inside and around us, and by nourishing seeds of job, peace, love, and understanding in ourselves, thus facilitating the work of transformation and healing in our consciousness. (p. 96)

Hanh highlights the need for what O'Reilley (1998) calls “being awake” (p. 9), a quality of present awareness without judgment of what one finds in that present moment. O'Reilley (1998) further extends Hanh's work into the field of Composition when she describes “deep listening” (p. 19) as act of giving attention “not to the momentary faltering but to the long path of the soul” (p. 21), and which she identifies as an antidote to the more problematic and less supportive practice of “critical listening” (p. 19):

In academic culture...we tend to pay attention only long enough to develop counterarguments; we critique the student's or the colleague's ideas; we mentally grade and pigeonhole each other. In society at large, people often listen with an agenda, to sell

or petition or seduce. Seldom is there a deep, openhearted, unjudging reception of the other. And so we all talk louder and more stridently and with a terrible desperation. By contrast, if someone truly listens... (the) spirit begins to expand. (p. 19)

It is this “terrible desperation” (which Kabat-Zinn terms *suffering* and Hanh calls *losing ourselves*) often leads dissertation-writing doctoral students, the present study’s ‘advanced academic writers,’ to leave their programs (Ehrenberg, Jakubson, Groen, So, & Price, 2007). An alleviation of this suffering was one of the central goals of this research project. To that end, and in terms of the additional practical uses of the proposed intervention program, the following were explicit goals of the present research project:

- Reduce advanced academic writers’ anxiety concerning the dissertation writing context
- Improve advanced academic writers’ self-efficacy (their abilities to self-moderate and self-assess) when engaging in writing related to the dissertation writing context
- Strengthen and reinforce advanced academic writers’ practices of self-compassion as they engage in the dissertation writing process
- Assess the effectiveness of the program by examining participants’ evaluations of the effect of participation in the program on their dissertation-related writing

Finally, a long-term goal of this research project was to develop a portable program of mindfulness intervention that could be adapted to support advanced academic writers in a variety of contexts.

The intervention program employed by this research took the form of a four-week mindfulness intervention and consisted of once-weekly, 90 minute sessions. Modeled after Strickland et al.’s 2016 All-Day Workshop at the *Conference on College Composition and*

Communication, “Mindful Writing: Taking Action toward a More Balanced Writing Life,” each session was organized around (1) a grounding practice of gentle yoga and mindful breathing and (2) a generative practice ten-minute intervals of mindful writing. The agenda of the individual sessions varied based on their placement in the schedule of the intervention; more time was allotted to discussion and reflection during the first and last sessions, while the middle sessions entered more directly and immediately into the core contemplative activities, the grounding and generative practices. Agendas for the sessions adhered closely the following organizations and are further explored below:

<p><u>Week 1:</u></p> <p>15 minutes – Introductions</p> <p>12 minutes – First impressions</p> <p>12 minutes – Mindfulness Talk: Introduction to mindfulness and the writing process (gentle and present awareness)</p> <p>10 minutes – Gentle yoga and mindful breathing</p> <p>30 minutes – Mindful writing (intervals of 10 minutes)</p> <p>10 minutes – Revisiting first impressions; reflections; questions</p> <p><u>Week 2:</u></p> <p>Before start of session – Welcome and check-in</p> <p>12 minutes – Mindfulness Talk (non-attachment from views)</p> <p>10 minutes – Gentle yoga and mindful breathing</p> <p>60 minutes – Mindful Writing (intervals of 10 minutes)</p> <p>8 minutes – Reflections; questions</p> <p><u>Week 3:</u></p> <p>Before start of session – Welcome and check-in</p> <p>12 minutes – Mindfulness Talk (lovingkindness)</p> <p>10 minutes – Gentle yoga and mindful breathing</p> <p>60 minutes – Mindful writing (intervals of 10 minutes)</p> <p>8 minutes – Reflections; questions</p> <p><u>Week 4:</u></p> <p>Before start of session – Welcome and check-in</p> <p>10 minutes – Mindfulness Talk (sustainable writing practices)</p> <p>10 minutes – Gentle yoga and mindful breathing</p> <p>50 minutes – Mindful writing (intervals of 10 minutes)</p> <p>20 minutes – Revising first impressions; reflections; questions</p>
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Figure 1. Weekly agenda for mindfulness intervention.

Several of the non-mainstream-Composition qualities of the weekly agenda bear discussion, description, and justification. Of note is that while these qualities were deeply informed by and modeled after different philosophical and methodological approaches (post-process and sustainable Composition pedagogies; Zen and Shambhala Buddhism; Theravada and Mahayana meditation; Vinyasa flow yoga), the use of a combined approach here was more beneficial than adhering to one single approach because it was more adaptable to the unique and varied needs of participants. The approach detailed herein was constructed based on a complimentary approach, wherein the different qualities and elements were chosen based on (1) how well they would work and fit with each other and (2) how they would best serve *as a whole* the expected needs of participants.

Welcome and check-in. The activity described in *Figure 1* as ‘Welcome and check-in’ came from my own experience as a Composition instructor. This period was an unstructured time before each session began during which I, as the facilitator-researcher, arrived to the room early and ‘checked-in’ with my participants (i.e., conversed with my participants to see how they were and follow-up on issues that may have been ongoing for them). The goal of this practice, as it had been in my teaching, was to informally create an atmosphere of friendliness, community, and emotional ease.

First impressions. In addition to the data collection measures described below (“Data Collection”), it was important to support participants’ own exploration of their writing processes during the intervention; to this end, during the first and final sessions, participants were asked to “describe their...attitudes toward academic writing” (Noll & Fox, 2003, p. 335) generally and their attitudes toward their own dissertations specifically. In anticipation of the frequent difficulty of even the most proficient writer to verbalize complex feelings, participants were

invited to compose visual or idea maps of their attitudes. During the first session, only five minutes were allotted to this activity; the purpose of this short period was to encourage participants to write from their instinct or their first impressions. I collected these maps at the end of the first session. On the occasion of the final session, participants were invited to complete the activity a second time and then had their initial maps returned to them and were invited to consider what elements may have altered. It was hoped that having maps of attitudes toward academic and dissertation writing in participants' own hands would compellingly encourage participants to interrogate their own journeys of growth.

Mindfulness talk. The activity described in *Figure 1* as Mindfulness Talk was in many of its intentions and characteristics, a *dharma* talk; that is, a brief talk on a relevant topic of concern to the present community's practice (Hanh, 1987; Kabat-Zinn, 2011). (It was not, however, termed a '*dharma* talk' for the reasons detailed below ("A note on language and ethos").) As with traditional *dharma* talks, each Mindfulness Talk began with expostulations and reflections on the specific topic for that session's Talk offered by the facilitator-researcher, followed by an invitation for reflections, generative discussion, questions, and theories from participants. Particularly in the latter part of the Talk, crosstalk among participants was encouraged and positively reinforced. Unlike the placement of the traditional *dharma* talk, however, which customarily occurs at the close of a meditation session (and is, in fact, a common method of closing a meditation session), each Mindfulness Talk preceded the core contemplative activities of the session and occurred early in the session. The reason for this organization was twofold: (1) beginning with a Mindfulness Talk grounded the session in an applicable aspect of mindfulness practice; (2) doing so reflected my own concern with making sessions as participant-centered as possible. Beginning with a Talk that eventually came to rest on participants' theories and

reflections and then concluding each session with participants' reflections and questions seemed more likely to keep the intervention anchored in participants' experiences and concerns (rather than in my own agenda as a researcher).

The sequencing of the topics of the Talks was meant to ease participants into potentially unfamiliar mindfulness practices within the contexts of their much more habituated writing practices, with the topic of each Talk chosen as much for its applicability to advanced academic writers' high stakes writing as for its accessibility by those who may be unfamiliar with more traditional Buddhist concepts of mindfulness. Though participants were surveyed before the start of the intervention to gauge their experience with and awareness of mindful practices, the Mindfulness Talk of the first session presented the concept of *gentle and present awareness* in layman's terms; that is, as a practice of actively inhabiting and experiencing the present moment. Modeled on Dr. Kim Weiner's approach in her KORU Mindfulness workshop, awareness was reinforced in the first session with a brief activity of mindful eating, wherein participants were guided through the process of experiencing a piece of chocolate with all of their senses (the sound of the wrapper, the sight of the chocolate in the hand, the smell of the chocolate, the mouth-feel of the chocolate, the taste of the chocolate as it melts in the mouth). Though including this activity necessarily meant less time would be spent on mindful writing during this session, the goal of this activity justified its inclusion; to attend, gently and fully, to the moment that was presently being experienced and to notice the choices that such attention permitted. This attention, or quality of noticing, formed a basic training for writers to attend to their immediate physical and emotional contexts before, during, and after writing. As was discussed at the close of this activity, an implication of such an act of attention was the practice of noticing anxiety or unease in the body or mind prior to, during, or following the act of writing, as well as the option

to approach those feelings in the way that one would have a piece of chocolate (that engagement was optional and in the writers' control).

The Mindfulness Talks of the second and third sessions were chosen in order to slowly venture with participants into more deeply philosophical components of mindfulness practice and to encourage their practice of viewing, with less emotional attachment and with a modicum of distance, both their writing practices and the feelings and tendencies that arise surrounding those writing practices. *Non-attachment from views*, or, the ability to see flexibility in the narratives and meanings attached to outcomes allows practitioners to more healthfully engage with and adapt to changes or shifts that may occur in the ordinary course of events. A secondary perspective, which was presented to participants, was that this was also the ability to consider or participate in an experience without (or with a minimum) of emotional attachment to what the outcome might be, allowing practitioners to engage more fully with the experience of the thing itself (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 8). This practice was an important component of advanced academic writers' healthful experience of the dissertation writing process; we as writers become so terribly attached to both our perspective on our topics and the expected outcomes of our work that changes, suggested revisions, or unexpectedly emergency events can seem fatal. A practice that values emotional fluidity and flexibility within a framework of less gripping attachment was vital to this process because it allowed advanced academic writers to reframe feedback and unexpected disruptions to their writing practices as opportunities to recall their original intentions as writer-researchers, to reinvest in the clarity and purpose of their research, and to be reminded of the wider implications of their work.

Lovingkindness (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 8), also termed "compassionate listening and loving speech" by Hanh (1987, p. 90-101), is a practice of deep compassion and

understanding. Though *lovingkindness* should be generally understood as an orientation of deep compassion toward all, in the context of the present intervention, the *self*-compassionate quality of this orientation received the greatest focus as it offered participants a means of reflecting on and interrogating the narratives that they had constructed about themselves as writers (and the possible links between that narrative and their narratives of themselves as adults, teachers, parents, and significant others). In an era in which common threads in the narrative of graduate study are lack of self-care, mental illness, and stagnation (Pyrall, 2016; Vitale, 2016; Arnold, 2014), it was imperative to begin to create a climate of positive self-relation, or put more simply, self-compassion.

The topic of the final Mindfulness Talk, *sustainable writing practices*, built from the foundation of the Talk on *lovingkindness* and extended the discussion into sustainable practices, habits, and orientations that could support advanced academic writers as they continued to engage in writing processes. Modeled after the joint CWWA-NCTE-NWP (2011) statement concerning those “habits of mind” that support “active” engagement in the writing process (p. 4-5), this Talk was grounded in those practices, habits, and orientations that were omitted from the intervention on the basis of time and necessity, but that nonetheless supported writers’ healthful and aware continued engagement with their writing, and served as a pre-conclusion to the intervention program.³ Following a brief explanation by the facilitator-researcher, the discussion was opened to participants, who, by this point in the intervention, had had time to consider some of the ways in which mindful practices could be incorporated further into their lives in order to support their own individual needs as advanced academic writers who were engaged in high stakes writing projects.

In the contexts of the present intervention, the language used to describe the topics of the talks was rooted in the MBSR work of Kabat-Zinn (2011) and was concerned with encouraging writers to aware-fully experience the processes associated with their writing practices, ideally with humility and gentleness and with a minimum of attachment or judgment. The exception to the Kabat-Zinn-esque framework was the topic of the final Talk; the topic of ‘sustainable writing practices’ was sourced from the works of Compositionists Hurlbert (2012) and Owens (2001), for though similar in philosophy to Kabat-Zinn, these two Compositionists are uniquely concerned with humanely sustaining writers’ writing practices within the context of higher education and thus spoke more directly to the population of the present research project.

Of additional note is that while participants were not assigned any kind of formalized homework as part of their participation, they were offered a series of take-home practices at the conclusion of each of the first three Mindfulness Talks. These take-home practices stemmed directly from the topic of each session’s Mindfulness Talk and were designed to be easily integrated into participants’ everyday activities. The goal of these take-home practices was to extend participants’ practices of awareness and compassion, with the added intention of reducing participants’ overall anxiety and supporting their practice of and belief in their own efficacy. The following table details the suggested take-home practices as they related to the subject of each session’s Mindfulness Talk:

<u>Topic of Mindfulness Talk:</u>	<u>Recommended take-home practice:</u>
Gentle and present awareness	Notice the body before, during, and after the act of writing, paying particular attention to tension
Non-attachment from views	Notice reactions and strong feelings; name them; <i>choose</i> subsequent behavior
Lovingkindness	Notice un-compassionate and self-critical thoughts; name them; let them go on out-breath

Figure 2. Description of take-home practices.

Gentle yoga and mindful breathing. The first part of the core contemplative activities around which the present intervention was built was ‘gentle yoga and mindful breathing.’ During this ten- to twelve-minute period, I, as the facilitator-researcher, began by leading participants in a sequence of gentle yoga poses (described to participants with their colloquial names: mountain pose, upward salute, side bend, eagle arms, heart opener, forward fold, rag doll). Modifications to poses were announced during the sequence as appropriate and based on participant need; particularly in the presence of participants who were not able-bodied or who had limited mobility, standing-to-seated and simplified modifications were offered as a matter of course (that is, they were announced as a mainstream option, rather than a “special” option for “particular” participants).

Following the sequence of gentle yoga, I guided participants in a period of brief seated breath- and intention-focused meditation. The style of this meditation was a combination of the *Zen* release of outcomes, the *Shambhala* focus on the sensations of breathing, the more intention-setting practice observed throughout mainstream Vinyasa flow yoga classes, and Hanh’s (1987) own description of meditation as a practice of “‘don’t just do something, sit there’” (p. 113). Depending on the general tenor of the group, participants were asked focus their attention or mind’s eye more on the physical sensations associated with breathing (the sensation in the nostrils, the expansion of the chest, the filling of the belly) or, as Beals (2015) suggests, on their emotional state, checking in with themselves and identifying their intention for the day (“What do you need today?”). And though traditionally of longer duration when experienced in meditation or yoga classes (often exceeding thirty minutes), the period devoted to meditation in the present intervention was of shorter duration (five minutes) so as not to lose or alienate those participants who may have been unfamiliar with the mental rigor of Buddhist meditation.

The goal of these contemplative practices was for participants to tune-in to themselves and the session by transitioning from the details and events exterior to the session to grounding themselves in the present moment, beginning in their bodies (gentle yoga) and moving on to their minds (mindful breathing). As was made clear throughout the intervention, it was never the intention of these practices to ignore or somehow avoid the realities of daily life but rather to allow these practices to be a means, as Hanh (1987) identifies, of finding our way *back into* our lives and our writing: “Meditation is not an escape from society. Meditation is to equip oneself with the capacity to reintegrate with society” (p. 53). The placement of these contemplative practices was similarly important; Hanh’s (1987) description of meditation specifically and mindfulness more generally is apt: “Sit there, stop, be yourself first, and *begin* from there” (p. 113; emphasis mine). Kabat-Zinn (2011) describes this beginning place as “the spaciousness of not knowing” (p. 297) while Hanh (1987) describes it above as a practice that grants an opportunity to “come back to what is happening in the present moment” (p. 96); the practice of beginning with gentle yoga and guided meditation gave participants a mindful starting place from which to enter into their writing processes and served as a space in which real and intuitive growth could occur. For, like Beals (2015) and Strickland et al. (2015), an additional goal of these contemplative practices was to facilitate an opening of the body in preparation for a mental opening (or, willingness) to the act of writing.

Mindful writing. The activity described in *Figure 1* as ‘Mindful writing’ was modeled after Strickland et al.’s (2015) approach to mindfully supporting struggling undergraduate and graduate student writers (which, in its turn, is modeled after Boice’s (2000; 1994) approach to supporting the complex needs of struggling faculty writers). Based on Boice’s earlier approaches, Strickland et al. (2015) advocate ten-minute periods of writing, separated by brief

(up to forty-five seconds) pauses during which writers conduct a quick body scan, checking for comfort and making adjustments as necessary. Much like the best-known instruction for freewriting, the instruction for writing during the ten-minute intervals was simply to write (or revise or research) for ten minutes; the goals of this practice were to more facilely enter into the work and maintain focus until the end of the period was called (in the case of the proposed intervention program, developing ease with this strategy more generally was a larger goal of the practice). The proposed intervention program adapted Strickland et al.'s (2016) (and thus Boice's (2000, 1994)) methods and applied them to support anxious or struggling advanced academic writers to find a way into their writing.

Like Strickland et al. (2015), the brief pauses were interspersed with longer breaks for movement (gentle heart-, hip-, and back-opening yoga were recommended, though participants were free to engage in whatever movement seemed most sensible to them); in the first and last sessions, this longer break occurred following the second ten-minute interval of writing (after a total of twenty minutes of writing), while in the middle two sessions, this break occurred following the third ten-minute interval of writing (after a total of thirty minutes of writing). There were two main goals of these inter-periods of movement: (1) to stimulate blood flow, which slows during periods of minimal activity (as occurs when engaging in writing); (2) to offer an alternative narrative for the body engaged in writing, one of movement rather than tenseness. In all but the first session (when I announced breaks verbally following the timer bell (discussed below)), breaks were announced solely with the timer bell and participants were free to engage in those self-orienting and re-centering activities that they deemed most appropriate within the given time.

For the purposes of the present intervention (and based on my experience of leading mindful writing workshops in my own department), time during the ten-minute periods of writing was kept using the Insight Timer meditation application on the facilitator-researcher's iPad. This application allows the user to ring timed sessions in and out using a Tibetan singing bowl (whereby the sound of the bell gently reverberates as it fades to silence). The use of this application allowed me, as the facilitator-researcher, to write alongside my participants; this was an important component of the *Mindful writing* activity, as it allowed me to both model the activity being practiced and supported an atmosphere of authentic, collaborative participation (rather than the environment of distance that could have been produced had I to set participants to their writing and then observed them at their writing). (My responsibility to support an atmosphere of authenticity is further discussed below in "Ethical Considerations.")

Population. This research project was "site-specific" (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012, p. 104); it occurred at a medium-sized, public four-year university located in a small, rural town in the Northeastern United States. Participants for this study were located via purposeful, criterion-based sampling, and were solicited via two rounds listserv emails to doctoral students across the disciplines who were at the dissertation-writing stage (at the institution at which this research occurred, being at the "dissertation writing stage" could mean working on anything from a preliminary proposal to drafting chapters, data collection, data analysis, or even dissertation revisions). Participants ranged in age beginning from approximately 23 years old and onward, and were of a variety of educational, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. Of particular note for the present research project, participants came with a range of experiences with mindfulness and contemplative activity; some participants came to the intervention with no experience at all. The proposed intervention program occurred in a seminar room located in an academic building on

campus; this building had, at the time of this writing, been in use for nearly one year and the seminar rooms were equipped with heating and air conditioning, windows with adjustable blinds, variable light settings, computer accessible television monitors, and a single computer. The goal of conducting of the intervention program in this physical environment was two-fold: (1) to hold the intervention program in a physical space that would be familiar to many of my participants (who had attended graduate seminars in similar rooms) and (2) to implicitly disrupt the existing ethos of the seminar classroom and re-present it as a mindful space that invited and supported awareness and writerly growth. Finally, for the sake of manageability (and in order to fit comfortably in the seminar room in which the intervention program took place), participation in the intervention program was capped at twenty.

Responding to Kabat-Zinn's (2011) reasonable and historicized identification of mindfulness interventions as "intrinsically a participatory engagement," the emails soliciting participants were an invitation to "participate in his or her own movement toward greater levels of health and wellbeing" as advanced academic writers, "starting from the actuality of (their) present circumstance, whatever it might be" (p. 293). Additionally, this style of solicitation called upon participants' "growth mindsets" (Dweck, 2014, n.p.); rather than presenting this intervention as a remedy to a deficit, soliciting participation in this way was consistent with the commitment of the present research to support the agency of writers in that it "depend(ed) on the (writer's) willingness to tap into those profound innate resources we all have by virtue of being human, the capacities for learning, growing, healing, and transformation" (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 293). In doing so, the intervention program presented participants with consistent language concerning its message, practices, and intentions; to empower advanced academic writers to

discover within themselves (with some help) the ability to improve their writing practices, processes, and productivity.

Disciplinary knowledge that comes from many places. The intentions that underwrote the extension of an invitation to participate in the proposed intervention program to advanced academic writers across the disciplines stemmed from two main, and in this case complimentary, perspectives. Though this research project was, at its core, a Composition dissertation, the philosophical framework underwriting it was, at least in part, rooted in Kabat-Zinn's (2011) and Hanh's (1987) representations of mindfulness. These representations state unequivocally that help should be available for all those who need help and an effort to reduce suffering should be made for all those who suffer (Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Hanh, 1987). From a Buddhist perspective, while these were, indeed, broad statements of values, their meanings were unmistakable; it would not have been ethical to limit participation in the proposed intervention program to only those advanced academic writers who were members of the Composition discipline specifically or the field of English more generally because supporting the dissertation writing practices and working to relieve the suffering of a writer in Psychology was not less important than supporting those same practices and relief of a writer in English. Further, from a Composition perspective, involving writers from across the disciplines in an intervention program that supported their writing practices, processes, and productivity (while also considering the ways in which such a program could be adapted to advanced academic writers in a variety of contexts) served as a definitive move to lastingly "create a campus culture that supports writing" (International Network of WAC Programs, 2014, p. 2). In these ways, it was possible to build disciplinary knowledge in Composition about the practices used by advanced academic writers when engaging in high stakes writing projects *and* how participating in a mindfulness intervention

program impacted particular practices while still remaining consistent with the two philosophical frameworks guided this research.

Data Collection

The process of data collection for this research project followed a mixed methodology, and relied on participants' self-report questionnaires, descriptive and semi-structured interviews, and the facilitator-researcher's own field journal. In the case of the two former methods, data collection occurred throughout the intervention program (immediately before, immediately after, and one-month following the proposed intervention program). The latter method of data collection, the facilitator-researcher's own field journal, was kept throughout the process of conducting the intervention program and collecting and considering the other forms of data (it began immediately after receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board and concluded during the process of data analysis). The combination of timed perspectives, questionnaires, and interview data painted a much richer and more detailed picture of participants' experiences of mindfulness as it pertained to their writing anxiety, self-efficacy, and self-compassion, while questionnaire and interview questions concerning participants' progress and completion of their dissertation-related writing and writing productivity provided data on the effectiveness of the intervention program itself.

Self-report questionnaires. Occurring immediately prior to beginning the program, following the final session, and finally one month following the intervention program, all participants completed a pre-, post-, and follow-up-to-intervention self-report questionnaire wherein they assessed their current levels of self-efficacy, management of writing anxiety, self-compassion, mindfulness, and dissertation-related writing practices; these self-report questionnaires were based on a synthesis of the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer,

2011, p. 250) and the self-efficacy and writing anxiety components of the survey were based on the methods used by Martinez, Kock, and Cass (2011) in “Pain and Pleasure in Short Essay Writing: Factors Predicting University Students’ Writing Anxiety and Writing Self-Efficacy” (where the included components from the latter were adapted for the present research project by refocusing the writing activities and goals as long-term, self-motivated, and noticeably higher in stakes) (Appendix B).

The first two rounds of self-report questionnaires occurred in person, while the third round occurred digitally (through the program Qualtrics). The self-report questionnaires were comprised of three main components: questions relating to mindfulness, questions relating to self-efficacy and writing anxiety, and questions relating to where writers were with their dissertation writing processes. Participants rated each statement on a five-point Likert-style scale ranging from *Strongly agree*, *Sometimes agree*, *Unsure*, *Sometimes disagree*, and *Strongly disagree*, with the goal of offering participants a wider variety of more nuanced responses than the more traditional five-point Likert scale. For the items pertaining to participants’ dissertation writing practices and progress, an additional option of *Not applicable* was available for those participants who had not yet reached later stages of the dissertation process.

The mindfulness components included questions such as “I find myself doing things without paying attention” and “I am able to focus on the present moment” (Baer, 2011, p. 250), while the self-efficacy and writing anxiety components included questions such as “I feel calm when interacting with my dissertation advisor” and “I can easily focus on the writing task at hand” (Martinez, Kock, and Cass, 2011). The dissertation writing practices components asked participants to reflect on the both the more tangible (number of pages written, expected number of pages, expected number of drafts until the submittable/final draft, rate of writing production)

and less tangible (progress with revision, clarity of ideas, hours spent writing consistently, and current satisfaction with writing productivity) aspects of the writing process. This final component (measuring writing productivity) helped to provide a basic understanding of the effectiveness of the intervention program.

Though anonymous, pre-, post-, and follow-up-to-intervention self-report questionnaires were matched, with the purpose of providing a measure of what, if any, change there were in participants' responses as a result of their participation in a mindfulness intervention. And though there were certainly extraneous and un-quantifiable factors also influencing possible changes in participants' responses, the interview responses of the Interview Participants (discussed below) shed light on major shifts or consistencies.

Interviews. During the period of soliciting participants for the present study (discussed above in "Participants"), 4-6 participants (called "Interview Participants") were additionally solicited from the larger group of participants in order to provide more in-depth perspectives on the experience of a mindfulness intervention. Participation as an Interview Participant was not dependent on gender or discipline; though an effort was made to include individuals with more and less experience with mindfulness practice, the final re/presentation of the data has made the utmost effort to also represent a diversity of perspectives, genders, and disciplines. The only additional requirement to be an Interview Participant was a willingness to be individually interviewed prior to, immediately following, and finally one month after the intervention (Appendices C-E). Prior to the start of the intervention program, the Interview Participants were expected to be interviewed about their interest in the mindfulness intervention program, as well as their experience with both writing and non-writing mindfulness practices, progress with their dissertations, writing habits, and related writing rituals. Interview Participants were also expected

to be interviewed in the days immediately following the final session about the perceived impacts of their participation in the intervention program on their writing, namely on their attitudes toward themselves as writers, their writing, and their writing productivity. Finally, in order to both follow-up with Interview Participants within the larger context of the semester system in which they would be working and give Participants time to incorporate supportive writing-related mindfulness practices into their regular practices, the Interview Participants were expected to be interviewed one month following the final session about both the delayed impacts of their participation in the intervention program and their practice of “mindfulness in daily life” (Baer, 2011, p. 251) as both related to their self-efficacy, writing anxiety, self-compassion, and writing productivity.

Given the tendency of mindfulness practice to lend itself narrative descriptions (as explored above in “Explicitly mindfulness-based pedagogies”), interview questions were semi-structured in an attempt to (1) more fully apprehend participants’ own narratives of their experiences and (2) honor and make room for discussion of the nuanced directions of participants’ thoughts and reflections. Interviews were expected to run between 25-35 minutes long and were recorded digitally; though it would undoubtedly have been of use to take notes (either digitally or by hand) during this process, I refrained as much as possible from doing so in order to more mindfully maintain my presence during interviews; however, following each interview, I made detailed notes in a field journal concerning my own impressions, questions, and ideas as a facilitator-researcher, dissertation writer, and practitioner of yoga and meditation.

Field journal. Using a field journal as a method of data collection came, in part, from my own experience with meditative writing and reflection. Borrowing from my experiences with my personal practice of journaling, I kept the field journal as a mindfully composed record of my

reflections, thoughts, questions, ideas, and preliminary interpretations *as I experienced them* and refrained from journaling when experiencing feelings of frustration or anger. In addition to constantly reinforcing a “reflective stance” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 23) in myself as a researcher, maintaining a field journal also allowed me to “keep a record of (my) changing thoughts about the literature and its relevance to (my) emerging research” (p. 23), and thus allowed me to work toward reflective revision of my dissertation project as I conducted my research and observed the implications of aspects of the literature in a real research context.

I kept the field journal throughout the process of conducting the intervention program and collecting and considering the data, beginning immediately after receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board and concluding during the process of data analysis. Following each phase of the data collection-related process, I journaled as an explicit response to the preceding activity (including composing the solicitation emails, conducting each of the first round of interviews, conducting each session of the intervention, and data analysis). The amount of time that I spent during each journaling session was not predetermined but rather was decided by what and how much I had to think about at a given moment during the research process.

Data Analysis and Presentation

As a mixed-methods research project that combined pre-intervention, post-intervention, and follow-up self-report questionnaires and interviews with a mindful and self-reflective field journal, the methods of data analysis were necessarily mixed in order to gain as fully detailed an understanding as possible of both participants’ experiences of the intervention program and the program’s effectiveness. To this end, an approach of descriptive and inferential statistics was used when engaging with the self-report questionnaires, while a grounded theory approach was employed when dealing with both the interview data and the field journal data. In terms of

presentation, it was expected that a fourth Chapter (Data Analysis) would be organized around themes arising from all of the data, throughout which it was expected that different sources of data would be cited to support and corroborate both each other and conclusions drawn from existing literature. In the case of the self-report questionnaire data, summaries of meaningful data were expected to be accompanied by the researcher's narrative interpretation these data within the larger framework of the research questions. In the case of the interview transcripts and field journal, findings from open-coded (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 191) interview data and excerpts illustrating relevant moments from both the interviews and the field journal were expected to be accompanied by the researcher's narrative interpretation of these data given the explicit goals of the present research project.

Deductive approach to self-report questionnaires. In order to apprehend the characteristics of participants' experiences within a set of predetermined components related to the research questions guiding this research project (practice of mindfulness, self-efficacy and writing anxiety, and dissertation writing practices and progress), a deductive approach was used to analyze the self-report questionnaire data. The raw data from this source existed partly in the filled-out paper self-report questionnaires and partly in the *Qualtrics* program; these data were then exported to SPSS, where I engaged in additional analysis in order to assess for both inferential comparisons between pre and post measures (a comparison of means (an ANOVA) to understand this dataset), as well as for trends, surprises, confirmations, and curiosities that existed in participants' matched responses. In this way, I was able to consider not only qualities and characteristics that existed across individual participants' three sets of responses, I was also able to make comparisons between different participants' responses within time-sets.

Though to an extent denatured, this raw data allowed me to form a clearer understanding of some existing attitudes and behaviors that impacted both participants' experience of the proposed intervention program and the efficacy on participants' practices of mindfulness, self-efficacy and writing anxiety, and dissertation writing practices and progress engendered by participating in the program. The generalizability of these findings helped me to make claims about the overall impact and effectiveness of the proposed intervention program in ways that would not have been possible had I worked only from qualitative data, with its well-documented and reasonable focus on the experiences of smaller groups of individual participants.

The findings from this data are presented through a combination of illustrative tables and interpretive narrative (Chapter 4), whereby relevant and notable data are presented in table form and preceding and succeeding text discussed the import and relevance of the data. In addition to being a useful and illuminating source of information, the self-report questionnaire data also served as a reference point and foundation for the data that arose from the interviews and field journal.

Grounded theory approach to interviews and field journal. In order to understand the layers of experience involved in the proposed intervention program, it was important to approach the interview and field journal data sources from a perspective of openness and curiosity. Practicing the principle of non-attachment from views (discussed above), interview transcripts were approached initially via a process of open-ended coding, whereby “categories of information (were) generated” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 191) by reading and re-reading. Once an initial list of notable or seemingly frequently occurring themes was determined (Bloomberg and Volpes' “big ideas”) (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 196), the researcher engaged in a process of “winnowing” (p. 197) or culling the list by “questioning the data,

identifying and noting common patterns in the data” (p. 197), categorizing the patterns, and relating the patterns to each other and the larger explicit goals of the present research project. Though complex, the goal of such an approach to the interview transcripts was to reduce what was an incredibly large, complex, and rich set of data into more manageable and workable, but no less complex or rich, sources of information. Information arising from the interview data filled in, highlighted, and added depth to the images outlined by the self-report questionnaire data.

Conversely, the field journal served the purpose of rounding out the understandings provided by the self-report questionnaire data and the interview data by providing an additional source of information and interpretation. Particularly on those occasions when I was unable to apprehend the above data (or during ‘stuck’ moments), the field journals gave me an additional perspective (my own) that illuminated particular moments during the intervention and underlying question or complication. For these reasons, while the interview data is presented in ways similar to the self-report questionnaire data, the field journal is solely presented through impressions and excerpts that help to make additional sense of the other two data sources.

Ethical Considerations

Facilitator ethos. A significant and most often implicit component of mindfulness interventions is the ethos of the facilitator; in those instances when ethos is discussed, these discussions tend to occur in informal comments during conference presentations or author talks. O’Reilley (1998; 1993) and Kabat-Zinn (2011) are two scholars who have made notable comments on the importance of the consistency of a facilitator’s ethos; O’Reilley (1993) writes eloquently on the confusions and internal struggles that she endures as a professor teaching for peace when she identifies the “place of discomfort” (p. 170) inherent in the occupation, while

Kabat-Zinn is explicit about the necessity for facilitators to live their practices in his discussion of the “Ethics” (p. 294) involved in teaching mindfulness:

...(I)t feels appropriate in our environment that the ethical foundation of the practice be more implicit than explicit, and that it may be best expressed, supported, and furthered by how we, the MBSR instructor and the entire staff of the clinic, embody it in our own lives and in how we relate to the patients, the doctors, the hospital staff, everybody, and of course, how we relate to our own interior experience. Ultimately, the responsibility to live an ethical life lies on the shoulders and in the hearts of each one of us who chooses to engage in the work of mindfulness-based interventions. (p. 295)

Similar to Kabat-Zinn’s MBSR instructors, I, as the facilitator-researcher, wore my ethos as an active practitioner of mindfulness and contemplative practice as closely to my skin as was possible during the intervention program for two reasons: personal authenticity and public ethos. Rather than attempt a performance of neutrality (Kopelson, 2003), which under other circumstances and in other intervention contexts may indeed have been more productive and less distracting for participants, I kept my facilitation of the intervention “very real and very close to (my) everyday experience held in awareness with kindness and discernment” (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 295) in order to both avoid disingenuousness and conduct research in ways that were consistent with the commitment to authentic living that I felt was integral to this kind of practice. I did not, as Kabat-Zinn (2011) notes, loudly or ostentatiously “profess a moral stance outwardly” of valuing mindfulness; I did, however, through gentle voice, calm demeanor, and relaxed appearance, implicitly represent the culturally-accepted ethos of mindful living noted above (“Secular outgrowths of MBSR”). Further, given the familiarity of potential participants with my personal inclinations toward mindfulness and contemplative practice (at the time of this

intervention program, I had given three scholarly workshops explicitly dedicated to mindful teaching and writing strategies, which had led to my reputation amongst my immediate peers as that “calm” person who “does mindfulness”), it would have been unproductive for me to attempt the subterfuge of neutrality and assumed a role that my participants were neither expecting nor were likely to accept as authentic (Powell & Takayoshi, 2003). It was both more productive and honest to trade on that reputation and inhabit the “role” that participants had “created for” me (and that I had created for myself) (Powell and Takayoshi, 2003, p. 394); my evolving specialty in mindful teaching and writing strategies was, after all, likely a significant factor in why participants who knew me personally felt comfortable taking part in the intervention program.

Researcher ethos. Similar to the transparency of my ethos as the facilitator of the intervention program discussed above, my ethos as a researcher in the context of this research project depended upon my ability to engage with my participants in consistent and credible ways. The quality of engaging credibly with my participants was two-fold: both in my collection of data concerning participants’ experiences and in my re/presentation of participants’ experiences in my own text. In terms of the former consideration, an ethical question arose concerning the collection of data that documented and invited examination of participants’ experience of writing anxiety, difficulty, and possibly even suffering. In the face of limited data concerning the writing practices of advanced academic writers engaged in high stakes writing projects, it was vital to begin to collect data in order to form preliminary understandings in our field about how best to support these writers; given this, it was incumbent upon me to mindfully and gratefully inform participants of the gap in knowledge that they were contributing to filling through their participation, as well as the potential aid that they were providing to future dissertation writers. Consequently, in terms of the latter consideration, it was possible to tread

mindfully and treat collected data gently, never forgetting that these ‘data’ were actually representations of participants’ experiences and should be treated with respect. Participants’ voices exist alongside my own voice in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 (Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses and Discussions, and Conclusions). In this way, I check my own biases and expectations as a researcher by presenting data that confirms, complicates, and redirects my initial research assumptions.

Study Delimitations

In order to conduct doctoral-level research that would produce a revealing and illuminating amount of data on an under-investigated issue, certain choices had to be made concerning the research questions, philosophical framework, methods, and timeframe that comprised this research project. Factors that limited the scope and focus of the research questions, the philosophical framework that underwrote the research project, and the population came from my own practices as a writer, as well as my interests and biases as a doctoral writer-researcher. My interest in mindfulness practices (including writing mindfully) are well-documented above (“Introduction” and “Participants”), while my choice to examine the experiences of and means of supporting doctoral student writers writing at the dissertation stage stemmed from the struggles that I had experienced personally, observed in peers, and seen discussed increasingly in conference presentations and *Chronicle of Higher Education* articles (and which I had seen go largely unaddressed in more official, programmatic contexts). This research project could just as easily have been focused on supporting the writing needs of undergraduate, elementary, elderly, or incarcerated writers through mindfulness practices, to name but a few possibilities; however, given my specialties and interests, the present course was the most logical and represented the best fit. However, as is discussed in Chapter 6, these other

directions are, as yet, unexplored and thus constitute reasonable and important avenues of future Composition research, possibly reproducing the present methods, if not precisely the present context-driven research questions.

Conversely, factors that limited the methods and timeframe of this research project stemmed from the material realities related to collecting data from participants who were engaged in, in addition to writing their dissertations, teaching and department responsibilities, and sometimes in family life, committed relationships, and parenthood, to name but a few commitments. When devising the methods of this intervention program, it quickly became important not to burden participants with a lengthy, overly involved (from their perspective) intervention protocol that would ask very much more of them than their participation in a regularly occurring intervention, completion of reports regarding and concerning that intervention, participation in interviews (for Interview Participants), and faith. Thus, the decision to implement mixed research methods that would at once produce rich and nuanced forms of data while also respecting participants' own needs, commitments, and responsibilities. Similarly, the decision to limit the period of time occupied by the study to four weeks with a one-month follow-up was limited by the material reality of the semester system in which all of my potential participants wrote and taught; for an intervention program that sought to support the writing needs of dissertation writers with mindfulness to carry over into a break from the semester seemed unkind and self-serving, and so the decision was made to limit the intervention program to occur in its entirety during the regular semester (and preferably well before Finals Week, when participants would be engaged with final assessment and the entering of grades). As is additionally discussed in Chapter 6, future Composition studies employing different methods (for example, purely qualitative) would certainly lead to very different (and differently nuanced)

findings due to their shift in the roles of the researcher, participants, and responsibility to create knowledge. Correspondingly, a study of a different duration (for example, a longitudinal study that follows fewer participants over a longer period of time following their participation in a mindfulness intervention) would certainly contribute a wealth of information to the field of Composition, likely with much wider implications for writing across the curriculum/writing in the disciplines programs.

CHAPTER 4

QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

Study Contexts

In order to describe what happened during the study, it is important first to discuss the contexts of the study itself, both in terms of the conditions surrounding data collection and the intervention program, as well as the make up of the participant population. The study took place over a period of two months in Spring 2017, between early April and late May; in terms of where this period fell within the overall semester, in a semester that ran from January 23 to May 5, the intervention took place over four weeks in April (4, 11, 18, and 25), with the pre-intervention interviews occurring in the first two weeks of the intervention, the post-intervention interviews occurring in the two weeks following the final intervention session, and the follow-up interviews occurring over a period of two weeks one month following the conclusion of the intervention program, in late May. The intervention program sessions occurred in a closed seminar room within the building that houses the both the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and the English department, and ran from 1:00-2:30 pm every Tuesday. Participants were supplied with a composition notebook at the beginning of the intervention program and the daily agenda at the start of each session, and tea, cups, and boiled water were on offer throughout the program. Pre- and post-intervention interviews were conducted in person (in small conference rooms adjacent to a large, open cubicle-style Teaching Associate and Temporary Faculty office) and, due to the geographical dispersion brought on by the ending of the semester in early May, follow-up interviews were conducted via video Skype. Pre- and post-intervention self-report questionnaires were administered in person immediately prior to and immediately following the first and final

intervention program sessions, respectively, while the follow-up questionnaire was administered via Qualtrics in late May.

Ten individuals attended the first intervention program session; of these, one chose not to continue in their attendance following the first session, one other attended two of the four intervention program sessions, and three individuals attended three of the four sessions. Of the inconsistent attendees, data from the first has been discounted and destroyed (in accordance with the measures laid out in both Chapter 3 of this document and the Institutional Review Board protocol that guided data collection for this study), data from the second has been included only insofar as it affects participants' mean responses in the pre-intervention self-report questionnaire, and data from the third group of participants has been included throughout. Table 1 clarifies each of the nine participant's involvement with the quantitative portions study, as well as their academic contexts:

Table 1

Descriptions of Participants and Their Involvement in the Collection of Quantitative Data

Participant name*	Doctoral program	Year in doctoral program	No. of sessions attended	Self-Report Questionnaire		
				Pre	Post	Follow-up
Clark	C&T	2	4	✓	✓	✓
Jamie	L&C	3	4	✓	✓	—
Marie	C&T	2	4	✓	✓	✓
Luca	C&T	2	4	✓	✓	✓
Lena	CRIM	3	4	✓	✓	✓
Mark	C&T	3	3	✓	✓	✓
Bartholomew	C&T	4	3	✓	✓	✓
Joshua	C&T	2	3	✓	✓	—
Lisa	L&C	3	2	✓	—	—

*All participant names are pseudonyms.

Key: C&T: Composition and TESOL (English Department)

L&C: Literature and Criticism (English Department)

CRIM: Criminology (Criminology and Criminal Justice Department)

Though they varied in their respective doctoral programs and years in their programs, all participants were in some way engaged in writing for their dissertation projects (either directly engaged in writing dissertation chapter text or in writing proposal material to initiate and support their dissertation research). Four participants were female and five were male. All participants were, by dint of their pursuit of their doctoral degrees and research, driven, bright, articulate, and seemed more than willing to share of their individual experiences during intervention sessions and interviews, respectively.

Chapter Contexts

It is useful when analyzing such a quantity of data as this study produced to select a frame through which to consider and communicate the story of participants' overall and individual experiences of the mindfulness intervention program. Given that (1) the greatest number of participants who were involved in the study directed their involvement toward the portion of the study from which quantitative data was collected (Table 1), (2) a vital function of intervention research is to apprehend participants' experiences of the new intervention activities, and (3) the broadest picture of participants' experiences may be painted from data that has come from the greatest number of participants, this chapter will consider the quantitative results in order to describe findings from all participants. To compliment the quantitative results and explore individual participants' stories, Chapter 5 will consist of an analysis and discussion of the more specific qualitative data produced by this study.

The most basic component of the quantitative data is participants' responses to each of the twenty-four self-report questionnaire items (Appendix B); the means of each questionnaire item are compared between and across the pre-intervention ($t1$), post-intervention ($t2$), and

follow-up tests (*t3*) and presented throughout this chapter. Additionally, meta-categories have been identified that reflect the larger concepts central to this study; these meta-categories included self-efficacy, management of writing anxiety, self-compassion, mindfulness, and writing productivity. These will also be presented and compared between and across the three points in time in the study (pre, post, and follow-up).

For the purposes of the study, participants' pre-intervention Self-Report Questionnaire responses will be treated as the 'baseline' or control group data with which to compare subsequent responses (responses from the post-intervention and follow-up tests); that is, the baseline responses indicate participants' levels of self-efficacy, management of writing anxiety, self-compassion, mindfulness, and writing productivity *prior to* the mindfulness intervention. In order to describe findings, this chapter will be organized as follows: a discussion of "General Trends and Patterns" across the intervention program will be followed by more specific macro-level discussions of "What Happened" from the pre-intervention to post-intervention tests (*t1* to *t2*) and the pre-intervention to the follow-up tests (*t1* to *t3*).⁴ The chapter will close with a concluding Discussion of the effectiveness of the program in the real world contexts in which it occurred.

Additionally, as a result of considering the quantitative data, certain shifts in language are employed in this chapter to better express the results and convey participants' responses. Increases in participants' mean responses to reverse-scored items impact the way the meta-categories are read; particularly, increases in participant's means to reverse-scored items in the *management of writing anxiety* meta-category make clear the fact that over the course of the intervention, participants' *management of writing anxiety* was what increased (rather than their *experience of writing anxiety*). Similarly, increases in participants' mean responses to items in

the final section of the Self-Report Questionnaire indicate that renaming *dissertation writing practices* as *dissertation writing productivity* more accurately illustrates the results.⁵

What Happened: General Trends and Patterns

An analysis of the general trends and patterns of the larger intervention program reveals that participants experienced both immediate and long-term increases in their self-efficacy, management of writing anxiety, self-compassion, mindfulness, and writing productivity. As *Figure 3* illustrates, participants' scores in all meta-categories increased from the beginning to the end of the four-week mindfulness intervention. The largest increases occurred in the *self-efficacy* and *management of writing anxiety* meta categories.⁶

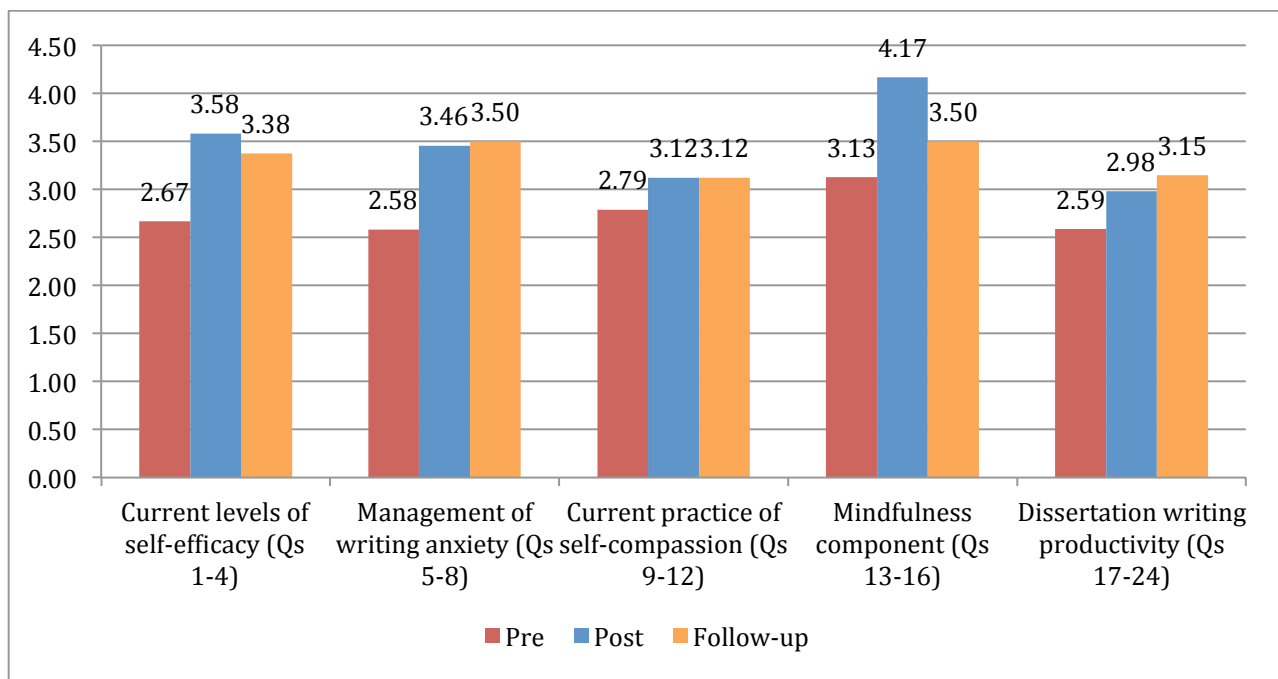


Figure 3. Means of self-report questionnaire meta sections over time (where n=6). This figure illustrates the changes in mean over time for each meta section in the self-report questionnaire from the pre-, post-, and follow-up tests.⁷

Figure 3 suggests that there was lasting positive change in participants' experiences from when they began the intervention program to when they ended it (from the pre-intervention to post-intervention tests), and that this change had lasting effect from the beginning of the program to

nearly two months after the program concluded. Participants' mean responses show gains in all meta-categories from pre-intervention to post-intervention and from pre-intervention to follow-up. And though *Figure 3* does indicate some decreases from the post-intervention to follow-up tests, it is notable that at no time do participants' mean responses decrease below the levels of the pre-intervention test; that is to say, even though participants' mean responses do go down from the post-intervention to follow-up tests, levels always stay above participants' starting points; this indicates lasting growth.

Participants' responses to the pre-intervention, post-intervention, and follow-up Self-Report Questionnaires indicate that they experienced large, and in some cases statistically significant, increased feelings of self-efficacy, abilities to manage their writing anxiety, mindfulness, practices of self-compassion, and dissertation writing productivity following their participation in the four-week program of mindfulness intervention. As is noted in *Figure 3*, the most marked increases in participants' mean responses tend to occur between the pre-intervention and post-intervention tests, or, more descriptively, the tests immediately bracketing beginning and end of the mindfulness intervention program. The gains experienced by participants between the pre-intervention and follow-up tests illustrate more moderate and lasting gains.

What Happened: Pre-Intervention to Post-Intervention Tests

Participants' responses to the pre- and post-intervention Self-Report Questionnaires indicate that participants experienced increased mindfulness, feelings of self-efficacy, and abilities to manage their writing anxiety by the conclusion of the four-week program of mindfulness intervention. Additionally, as is illustrated in *Figures 3* and *4* (above and below, respectively), participants experienced smaller increases in their dissertation writing productivity

and practices of self-compassion in the time immediately following their experience of the four-week mindfulness intervention program.

As *Figure 3* indicates, there are increases (and sometimes large and/or statistically significant increases) in participants' mean responses between the pre-intervention and post-intervention tests ($t1$ and $t2$, respectively). Further, as noted above, the most marked increases of the study occur in the time between these two tests; 22 out of 24 items show increases, 2 out of 24 items remain stable, and no items show decreases. In order to more fully consider the changes in participants' mean responses between the pre-intervention and post-intervention tests, *Figure 4* (below) provides a visual illustration of the movement in responses to each survey item comprising the Self-Report Questionnaire.

Increases from pre-intervention to post-intervention. As is noted in *Figure 4*, a comparison of participants' mean responses from the pre-intervention to post-intervention tests shows an unmistakable pattern of increases or, in the specific context of the Self-Report Questionnaire, a clear pattern of positive growth:

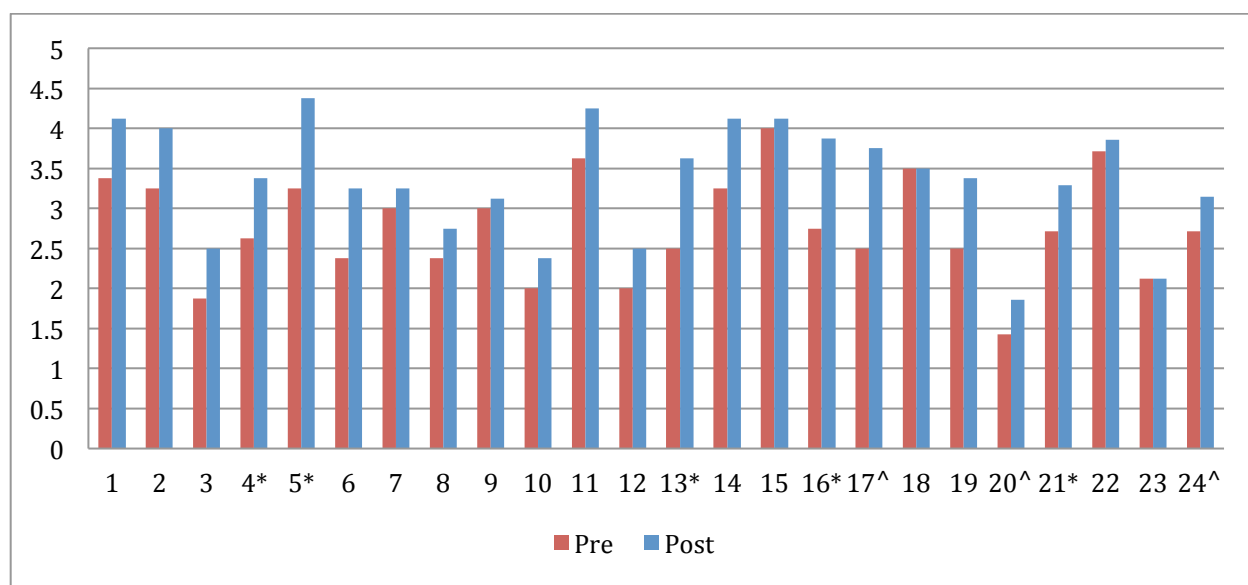


Figure 4. Means of individual self-report questionnaire items from $t1$ to $t2$ (where $n=8$). This figure illustrates the changes in mean over time for each question in the self-report questionnaire,

from the pre-intervention to post-intervention times. (Where * indicates an item that had a statistically significant change in means ($P = \leq 0.05$) and ^ indicates an item that had a change that approaches a statistically significant change in means ($P = 0.06-0.099$).)

The largest margins of growth occur in items where participants' mean pre-intervention responses are at or above a 2.5 (which, in the language of the Self-Report Questionnaire, places their response squarely between the “Sometimes disagree” and “Unsure” options on the Likert-style rating apparatus); in the language of the meta-categories, these larger margins of growth occur in items where participants already report median-levels of self-efficacy, management of writing anxiety, self-compassion, mindfulness, and writing productivity (for the purposes of this discussion, to be termed “awarenesses”) Participants' mean responses indicate the following trends in growth, ordered from the meta-category with the largest margin of growth to that with the smallest margin of growth: *Mindfulness component*, *Current levels of self-efficacy*, *Management of writing anxiety*, *Dissertation writing productivity*, and *Current levels of self-compassion*. Given the timing of pre-intervention and post-intervention tests (immediately before and immediately following the mindfulness intervention program, respectively), these across-the-questionnaire increases in participants' mean responses suggest quantifiably positive responses to exposure to the intervention program.

Within these margins of growth, participants' mean responses to items 4, 5, 13, 16, and 21 show statistically significant increases and items 17, 20, and 24 show increases that approach statistical significance:

Table 2

Statistically Significant or Approaching Significant Items from Pre-Intervention to Post-Intervention Tests (n=8)

<u>Meta category and self-report questionnaire item</u>	<u>Pre</u>	Mean <u>Post</u>	<u>Statistical significance</u>
Self-efficacy			
4. When I am writing, my mind often wanders off and I have difficulty returning to the writing. (reverse-scored)	2.625	3.375	.048*
Management of writing anxiety			
5. I feel calm when interacting with my dissertation advisor.	3.25	4.375	.015*
Mindfulness			
13. I find myself doing things without paying attention. (reverse-scored)	2.5	3.625	.007*
16. It seems I am “running on automatic” without much awareness of what I’m doing. (reverse-scored)	2.75	3.875	.015*
Dissertation writing productivity			
17. I am satisfied with my progress with the revision of my document.	2.5	3.75	.072^
20. Rate of writing production (pages per week).	1.4286	1.8571	.078^
21. Number of pages written.	2.7143	3.2875	.030*
24. Expected number of drafts until the submittable/final draft.	2.7142	3.1429	.078^

Key: * indicates an item that had a statistically significant change in means ($P = \leq 0.05$)

^ indicates an item that had a change that approaches a statistically significant change in means ($P = 0.06-0.099$)

In terms of the Research Questions that guide the present inquiry (and given that the pre- and post-intervention tests immediately bracket the intervention program), the statistically significant increases detailed in Table 2 suggest that the self-efficacy and management of writing anxiety of advanced academic writers is substantially improved by participating in a four-week program of mindfulness intervention (Question 1). Though not of statistical significance, *Figure 4* suggests that the self-compassion of advanced academic writers is also substantially improved by participating in a four-week program of mindfulness intervention. Further, the results presented in both *Figure 4* and Table 2 strongly suggest that practicing the present-centered, non-judgmental stance encouraged by a program of mindfulness intervention positively and substantially impacts the writing productivity of advanced academic writers (Question 1.a.).

Stability from pre-intervention to post-intervention. Participants' mean responses break with the larger trend of positive growth on only two occasions in the pre- to post-comparison; participants' mean responses to items 18 and 23 remain stable across the two tests:

Table 3

Items from Pre-Intervention to Post-Intervention Tests That Show Stability in Means (n=8)

<u>Meta category and self-report questionnaire item</u>	<u>Mean</u>	
	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>
Dissertation Writing Productivity		
18. My ideas are clearly articulated in my writing.	3.6667	3.6667
23. Hours spent writing consistently.	3.5	3.5

Unlike the largest margins of growth and the statistically significant items in this comparison, the items that show stability between the pre-intervention and post-intervention tests illustrate that participants began the four-week program of mindfulness intervention with already median-to-

high levels of awarenesses. Given the high ceiling that caps the larger trend of improvement revealed by a pre-post comparison (where the highest level of awarenesses illustrated by participants' post-intervention mean responses is 4.375, or between "Sometimes agree" and "Strongly agree"), the stability of participants' mean responses to items 18 and 23 is not suggestive of an ineffectualness of the intervention program; rather, this stability suggests that participants' were supported in both their perceptions of the clarity of their ideas and time spent writing by their participation in the four-week program of mindfulness intervention. Additionally, this stability is suggestive of the timing of the post-intervention test; occurring at the end of April and a mere week before Finals Week, the stability of participants' post-intervention responses to items 18 and 23 suggests that participants could not engage in appreciably increased dissertation writing practices due to larger, external demands and time constraints.

What Happened: Pre-Intervention to Follow-up Tests

Participants' responses to the pre-intervention and follow-up Self-Report Questionnaires indicate that from the beginning of the four-week program of mindfulness intervention to approximately one month following the conclusion of the program, participants experienced large, and in some cases, statistically significant increases in both their abilities to manage their writing anxiety and in their feelings of self-efficacy (*Figures 3 and 5*, above and below, respectively). The same comparison illustrates that participants experienced increases in their dissertation writing productivity, mindfulness, and practices of self-compassion.

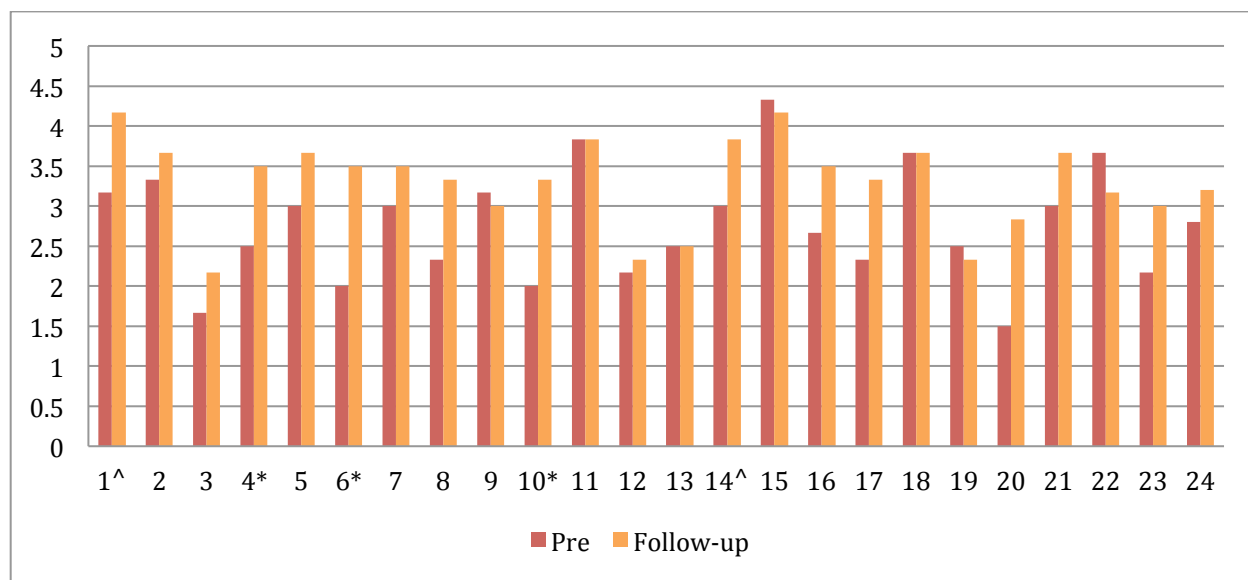


Figure 5. Means of individual self-report questionnaire items from $t1$ to $t3$ (where $n=6$). This figure illustrates the changes in mean over time for each question in the self-report questionnaire, from the pre-intervention to follow-up times. (Where * indicates an item that had a statistically significant change in means ($P = \leq 0.05$) and ^ indicates an item that had a change that approaches a statistically significant change in means ($P = 0.06-0.099$).)

Similar to the results illustrated in *Figure 4*, *Figure 5* indicates that a comparison of participants' mean responses between the pre-intervention and follow-up tests shows a consistent pattern of increases; 17 out of the 24 items show increases, 3 out of the 24 items remain stable, and 4 of the 24 items show decreases.

Increases from pre-intervention to follow-up tests. *Figure 5* illustrates that a comparison of participants' mean responses from the pre-intervention to follow-up tests shows an overall pattern of increases or, in the specific context of the Self-Report Questionnaire, an overall pattern of positive growth. The largest margins of growth occur in items where participants' mean pre-intervention responses are at or above a 2 or, in the language of the Self-Report Questionnaire, "Sometimes disagree." In the context of the Self-Report Questionnaire, these larger margins of growth occur in items where participants report low-to-median levels of awarenesses in the pre-intervention test. Participants' mean responses indicate the following

trends in growth, in order from greatest to smallest margin of growth: *Management of writing anxiety*, *Current levels of self-efficacy*, *Dissertation writing productivity*, *Mindfulness component*, *Current practice of self-compassion*. In view of the timings of the pre-intervention and follow-up tests (immediately before the mindfulness intervention program and one month following the conclusion of the program, respectively), these increases in participants' mean responses suggest quantifiably lasting positive response to exposure to the mindfulness intervention program.

Within the above margins of growth, participants' mean responses to items 4, 6, and 10 show statistically significant increases, while items 1 and 14 show increases that approach statistical significance:

Table 4

<i>Statistically Significant Items from Pre to Follow-up Tests (n=6)</i>			
<u>Meta category and self-report questionnaire item</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Mean Follow-up</u>	<u>Statistical significance</u>
Self-Efficacy			
1. I can easily focus on the writing task at hand.	3.1667	4.1667	.076^
4. When I am writing, my mind often wanders off and I have difficulty returning to the writing. (reverse-scored)	2.5	3.5	.041*
Management of writing anxiety			
6. When asked how my writing is going, I often “freeze up” and reply with a stock answer (i.e., “It’s going well” or “It’s fine”). (reverse-scored)	2	3.5	.017*
Self-compassion			
10. I often tell myself I shouldn’t be feeling the way I’m feeling. (reverse-scored)	2	3.3333	.010*
Mindfulness			
14. I am able to focus on the present moment (what I am seeing, doing, tasting, feeling, hearing, or	3	3.8333	.093^

smelling).

Key: * indicates an item that had a statistically significant change in means ($P = \leq 0.05$)

^ indicates an item that had a change that approaches a statistically significant change in means ($P = 0.06-0.099$)

In terms of the Research Questions that guide the present study, the pattern of increases illustrated in *Figure 5* and the statistically significant increases detailed in Table 4 suggest that advanced academic writers show substantial long-term gains in their feelings of self-efficacy, management of their writing anxiety, practice of self-compassion, and mindfulness by participating in a four-week program of mindfulness intervention (Research Questions 1 and 1.a.). And though the results do not register as statistically significant, *Figure 5* suggests that advanced academic writers also experience measurable and lasting gains in their dissertation writing productivity following their participation in the mindfulness intervention program (Question 1.a.). Further, given that participants had been out of the mindfulness intervention program for a full month by the time they completed the follow-up Self-Report Questionnaire, the results in both *Figures 3* and *5* strongly suggest participants' abilities to carry the new self-monitoring and self-awareness practices that were encouraged by the mindfulness intervention program forward into their own lives and, at least, immediate futures (Question 1.b.).

Decreases pre-intervention to follow-up tests. Similar to its illustration of increases in participants' mean responses, *Figure 5* also reveals the very minor decreases (non-statistically significant) that occur in participants' mean responses from the pre-intervention to follow-up tests; the four decreasing items are detailed below:

Table 5

Items from Pre-Intervention to Follow-Up Tests That Show Decreases in Means (n=6)

Meta category and self-report questionnaire item	Pre	Mean Follow-up
Self-compassion		
9. Often when I am stuck or am not progressing quickly in my writing, I berate myself. (reverse-scored)	3.1667	3
Mindfulness		
15. I am able to accept the thoughts and feelings that I have.	4.3333	4.1667
Dissertation writing productivity		
19. I am currently satisfied with my writing productivity.	2.5	2.3333
22. Expected number of pages written (expectations of current draft).	3.6667	3.1667

Of the four decreasing items detailed in Table 5, participants' mean responses to three items (items 9, 15, and 22) showed gains from the pre- to post-intervention tests that could only be termed "modest" (gains between 0.125-0.1428); this is to say that the results reported for these three items in Table 5 illustrate an undoing of only modest or minimal gains from the pre-intervention to post-intervention to follow-up tests. Only in the case of item 19 does this pattern differ; from the pre- to post-intervention tests, participants' mean responses to item 19 rose from

2.5 to 3.375, showing a larger gain of 0.875. (In the language of the Self-Report Questionnaire, these differences indicate that while participants' pre- to post-intervention mean responses to items 9, 15, and 22 showed gains that did not change the position of their responses on the Likert-style rating apparatus, participants' mean responses in the same comparison to item 19 moved their responses from the "Sometimes disagree"/"Unsure" position up to the "Unsure"/"Sometimes agree" position.) And so while the decrease noted in Table 5 concerning participants' mean responses to item 19 appears slight (a loss of only 0.1667, a difference which would not shift its position on the Likert-style rating apparatus in *this* comparison), it is nonetheless a curious decrease when taken in the larger context of a pre- to post- to follow-up comparison.

Stability from pre-intervention to follow-up tests. Similar to the marginal-yet-curious decreases noted above, *Figure 5* and Table 6 (above and below, respectively) also reveals patterns in participants' mean responses that should be viewed within a larger, cross-study context:

Table 6

Items from Pre-Intervention to Follow-Up Tests That Show Stability in Means (n=6)

Meta category and self-report questionnaire item	Mean	
	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Follow-up</u>
Self-compassion		
11. I am often able to celebrate small milestones, even knowing that there is more work to be done.	3.8333	3.8333
Mindfulness		
13. I find myself doing things without paying attention.	2.5	2.5
Dissertation writing productivity		
18. My ideas are clearly articulated in my writing.	3.6667	3.6667

Of the three stable items detailed in Table 6, two of the items (items 11 and 13) showed increases in the post-intervention test (in the post-intervention test, participants' mean responses to item 11 is 4.333 and to item 13 is 3.5). This post-intervention spike suggests that the experience of the four-week program of mindfulness intervention briefly increased participants' experiences of these specific awarenesses in the short term before they returned to their pre-intervention levels after one month's removal from the intervention program. Of additional note is that, unlike items 11 and 13, participants' mean responses to item 18 show stability across the three tests (once adjusted for changes in population size). Further, unlike the pattern of decreases and similar to the statistically significant growth items noted elsewhere in this section, the pre-intervention to

follow-up stability detailed in Table 6 suggests that participants experience more stable awarenesses over the course of the intervention study when they begin the study with median-level awarenesses.

Discussion

Program Effectiveness. The quantitative results detailed in this chapter represent the first “systematic” (Rose & McClafferty, 2001, p. 27) analysis of the impacts on self-efficacy, management of writing anxiety, mindfulness, and dissertation writing productivity experienced by advanced academic writers following their involvement in a program of mindfulness intervention. Per the quantitative results and from a programmatic perspective, the four-week program of mindfulness intervention was successful and the program was effective in its support of its advanced academic writer participants; the pre- to post-intervention results demonstrate substantial gains in the short term for participants’ self-efficacy, management of writing anxiety, practices of self-compassion, mindfulness, and dissertation writing productivity, while the pre-intervention to follow-up results highlight steadier, lasting gains across all of the meta-categories. The implications of these gains suggest themselves first in a discussion of what the gains indicate and, following that, a consideration of how the results of the mindfulness intervention program may be interpreted as indicative of growth that could be greater still, under conducive conditions.

Particularly in terms of the items to which participants’ mean responses show statistically significant increases from the pre- to post-intervention tests, increases in items in the *Self-efficacy*, *Management of writing anxiety*, and *Mindfulness* meta-categories demonstrate participants’ greater engagement in self-awareness and increases in their ability to be aware of unhealthy or counter-productive patterns of thinking. The noticeable increases in participants’

mean responses to these particular items suggest participants' engagement in the "non-fixing orientation" – wherein participants experience and "come to terms with things as they are" with compassion, self-agency, and awareness (and without feeling the need to change or "fix" them) (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 292) – that was observed by Kabat-Zinn in his MBSR participants. This orientation is similarly consistent with the suggestion of participants' growth (rather than fixed) mindsets (Dweck, 2014) concerning their own patterns of thinking and awareness. (A larger implication of this suggestion, however, lay in the relationship that this suggests between mindfulness intervention and the encouragement of a growth mindset in advanced academic writers and which is discussed in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6.)

A closer examination of the pre- to post- to follow-up growth illustrated in participants' mean responses to specific items (detailed below) in the Self-Report Questionnaire further demonstrates participants' increasing engagement with the "present-centered, non-judgmental awareness" that is both forwarded by Williams and Kabat-Zinn (2011, p. 6) in their description of an "operational definition" of mindfulness and hoped for in the present study's Research Question 1.b.

Table 7

Comparison of Means Across the Pre-, Post-, and Follow-up Tests (n=6)

Meta category and self-report questionnaire item	<u>Pre</u>	Mean <u>Post</u>	<u>Follow-up</u>
Management of writing anxiety			
6. When asked how my writing is going, I often “freeze up” and reply with a stock answer (i.e., “It’s going well” or “It’s fine”). (reverse-scored)	2	3.333	3.5
8. I can easily let go of anxious or nervous feelings concerning my writing.	2.3333	2.8333	3.3333
Self-compassion			
10. I often tell myself I shouldn’t be feeling the way I’m feeling. (reverse-scored)	2	2.3333	3.3333

Within the context of the two month study, participants’ mean responses in items such as the ones detailed in Table 7 suggest that, as a result of participating in the mindfulness intervention program, participants’ are more able engage with their immediate contexts more mindfully, responding to queries based on real-time emotions (rather than relying on protective or stock responses) and engaging with the “non-fixing orientation” (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 292) that enables them to accept and release with less fear counter-productive emotions or thoughts.

Effective practices and affected meta-categories. *Figure 3* suggests that between the pre-intervention and post-intervention tests, participants responded well to all of the central practices of the intervention program and that they responded particularly well to the workshop

trainings on mindfulness, self-efficacy, and the management of writing anxiety. In two of these categories, however, participants' means indicate a decrease in these responses from the post-intervention to follow-up tests; participants' mean self-efficacy scores show marginal decreases in this time, while participants' mean mindfulness scores decrease dramatically (though, per the trend of the larger study, at no time do follow-up mean scores decrease to a level that is below where participants began the program, at the pre-intervention mean scores). These decreases, when taken together with the only-moderate increases that characterize participants' post-intervention to follow-up responses regarding their management of writing anxiety and dissertation writing productivity (as well as the stability during this time in participants' practice of self-compassion) suggest that there were factors acting on participants' experiences of the meta-category awarenesses that went beyond the scope of the intervention program.

Taken more broadly, the moderate trajectories of participants' gains from the post-intervention to follow-up tests (as well as their decreases), are more easily understood within the larger context the conditions that prevailed at the time of the post-intervention and follow-up tests. Occuring at the end of the last full month of the semester (a mere two weeks before Finals Week) and nearly one month following the end of the semester (respectively), it is likely that participants were, at the time of the post-intervention test, taken up with teaching- and course work-related responsibilities and that they were adjusting to the out-of-semester rhythm of their lives at the time of the follow-up test. However, given participants' marked and, in some cases, dramatic responses to the practices during the program (noted in the differences between participants' pre- and post-test mean scores), greater exposure to the mindfulness intervention program may help to mitigate post-intervention declines; indeed, participants' interviews (discussed in Chapter 5) indicate that more time spent in the intervention program may serve to

do exactly that. Finally, while it is impossible at this stage to state the precise reasons why participants who started the program with moderate levels of awareness seemed to respond more to the workshop practices than those who began the program with very low awarenesses, the qualitative results discussed in the next chapter suggest that these differences may be due, at least in part, to the role of the workshop in encouraging a healthful sense of community, reciprocity, and gratitude – rather than serving as group therapy – among participants.

The unmistakable patterns of growth detailed in this chapter can be further understood through a secondary analysis of the qualitative data collected in this study; this analysis further demonstrates the overall productivity and efficacy gains made by participants while also investigating the presence of the emotional gains experienced by participants as a result of their engagement with the four-week program of mindfulness intervention.

CHAPTER 5

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

Interview Contexts

An analysis of the qualitative data collected in the study reveals the larger story of participants' experiences of the four-week program of mindfulness intervention and particularly highlights the emotional and dispositional gains they experienced in the time following their participation. This qualitative data exists in the specific, person-to-person narratives and observations that comprise participants' interviews and my own field journal. As discussed in the previous Chapter, the pre-intervention, post-intervention, and follow-up interviews (*i1*, *i2*, and *i3*, respectively) occurred over a period of nine weeks from mid-April to late-May during the Spring 2017 semester. Due to the close timing of the beginning of the intervention program with national field- and profession-specific events,⁸ the pre-intervention interviews occurred during the first week and a half of the intervention program (from early- to mid-April). The post-intervention interviews occurred in the week and a half immediately following the last session of the intervention program (from late-April to very early-May), while the follow-up interviews occurred four to five and a half weeks following the final session of the intervention program (late-May). Pre- and post-intervention interviews, as well as the stand alone interview (discussed below), were conducted in-person in small, private conference rooms that are adjacent to the large, open cubicle-style space that serves as the English Department's Teaching Associate and Temporary Faculty office, and, due to the geographical dispersion brought on by the ending of the semester in early May, follow-up interviews were conducted via video Skype. On average, interviews lasted between forty-five to sixty minutes; the duration of each was wholly

determined by the length of participants' responses to the open-ended interview questions (stemming from participants' own tendencies to verbosity or brevity).

As a result of observing the intervention program sessions, I, as the facilitator-researcher, made minor revisions to the interview questions in order to more closely align my questions with the flow of the intervention sessions and the topics raised there by participants. (These revisions were fully within the scope of this project's Institutional Review Board protocol and are noted in Appendices C-E.) At the beginning of each interview, participants were informed of the contexts of the interview (the length of time afforded by the room reservation and the number of questions that would be asked), advised that they could and should ask questions at any time in the proceedings, and asked if they would permit the interview to be audio recorded. During the interviews, I took minimal notes, preferring to engage with participants in as normal and conversational a manner as possible; the audio recording device was either tucked under my notes or placed at a distant point on the table that sat between myself and participants. Crosstalk in the interviews was not an uncommon occurrence and the tone of conversation was natural, friendly, and cooperative.

Of the nine individuals who participated in the intervention program sessions (Table 1), five initially volunteered to participate in the three rounds of interviews (Table 8, below). One of the participants identified in interviews as a multilingual writer, while the remaining four were mainstream writers. Two additional individuals expressed interest in interview participation; in the case of the first, the participant missed the scheduled pre-intervention interview and chose not to schedule a second attempt (due, I believe, to schedule constraints). In the case of the second participant, the expression of interest occurred in the third week of the intervention program (a full week and a half following the last pre-intervention interview and only one week

before the final intervention program session); I thanked the participant sincerely and respectfully declined.

Table 8

Descriptions of Interview Participants

Participant name*	Gender	Prior experience with mindfulness ⁹	Interview Participation			
			Pre	Post	Follow-up	Stand-alone
Mark	M	No	✓	✓	✓	–
Bartholomew	M	Yes	✓	✓	✓	–
Jamie	F	Yes	✓	✓	✓	–
Luca	M	Yes	✓	✓	✓	–
Lena	F	Yes	✓	✓	✓	–
Clark	M	No	–	–	–	✓

*All participant names are pseudonyms.

As is indicated in Table 8, there is an anomalous entry; Clark, a multilingual writer and individual who attended all four sessions of the intervention program (Table 1) and who had not previously volunteered for participation in the interviews is nonetheless included here.¹⁰ Due to the timing of Clark's standalone interview (scheduled, as it was, amongst the other post-intervention interviews) and the immediately-reflective nature of the interview questions, it will be included in the analysis that follows as part of the post-intervention interview (*i2*) data.

Chapter Contexts

This chapter will examine key features that occur in the interview and field journal data whose critical characteristics have risen to the surface of the data through a process of open-coding and grounded theory analysis; in doing so, this chapter will complement the analysis and discussion comprising Chapter 4 by more fully considering specific aspects of the quantitative

data from the perspective of participants' own pre-intervention, post-intervention, and follow-up descriptions, as well as from my observations as facilitator-researcher in the field journal.

The most basic component of the qualitative data is participants' responses to the pre-, post-, and follow-up interview questions (Appendices C-E). Transcripts of these interviews comprise some four hundred pages and range in topic from close relation to the intervention program or mindfulness more generally (per the open-ended interview questions) to participants' lives as a doctoral candidate, their non-academic pursuits (athletic training, writing fan fiction), and their political views.¹¹

For the purposes of the study, participants' pre-intervention interview responses will be treated as a 'baseline' with which to compare subsequent responses (responses from the post-intervention and follow-up interviews). That is, the pre-intervention interview responses describes where participants were prior to any/at the very beginning of the mindfulness intervention program. In order to describe findings, this chapter will be organized as follows: an analysis of "General Trends and Patterns" across the interviews will be followed by more specific analyses of key features that appear in the interview transcripts; in appropriate cases, analyses of key features will be supported by my field journal observations. The chapter will conclude with discussions of key findings suggested by the qualitative data, as well as a consideration of the program revisions that are cumulatively indicated by the both the quantitative and qualitative data.

What Happened: General Trends and Patterns

An overview of the qualitative data reveals that participants consistently responded well to the intervention program; as is illustrated further below, participants consistently employed positive terms when describing their experiences of the mindfulness intervention program and

the practices they engaged with therein. However, unlike the steep increases in participants' mean levels of awarenesses reported between the pre- and post-intervention Self-Report Questionnaires (and the more moderate growth reported from the pre-intervention to follow-up tests), the most noticeable gains in the qualitative data appear in a comparison between the pre-intervention and follow-up interviews; with the exception of one participant (Mark, a writer with already notably high levels of pre-intervention writing productivity, self-efficacy, and management of writing anxiety), interview participants' consistently describe feeling a greater sense of satisfaction with their writing and their progress by the end of their participation (by their follow-up interview).

Analyses of each individual participants' set of interviews is similarly revealing: Lena's interviews reveal a pre-existing history of struggle and doubt with regards to her dissertation writing; prior to her involvement in the intervention program, Lena described not only not progressing with her dissertation project by any of the standards usually used to measure academic progress, but also divorcing altogether her dissertation writing from her more confident and successful academic writing activities (i.e., she did not, at the time of the pre-intervention interview, consider the dissertation to be a form of academic writing at all, but rather expressed that "all of the fears and the insecurities I have about creative, non-academic writing, I think I'm also applying them to the dissertation."). By her follow-up interview, however, she describes having structure, purpose, and confidence in her dissertation writing. By his follow-up interview, Bartholomew, a struggling, though highly intellectually independent writer, was able to self-identify as a writer to the extent that he used the group noun "we" when discussing his self-identification as an academic writer rather than the singular noun "I" for a non-member of a group that he had employed in earlier interviews to describe himself. By her follow-up, Jamie

expressed feeling more at ease with her own expectations of herself as a writer and described how she had gotten her “baskets” of writing-related tasks organized. Where, in earlier interviews Luca had described feeling “anxiety” and “some sort of compulsion” toward his dissertation project, he described feeling more self-motivated and interested in pursuing his research in the follow-up interview. Finally, in his stand alone interview, Clark described his attempts to “find my own way of yoga” in his library-based writing routine as a means of helping him to “concentrate on writing, to concentrate on what I’m doing now.”

“Mindfulness Under Another Name”

Pre-intervention, post-intervention, and follow-up interviews indicate that Mark and Jamie, writers who reported moderate to moderate-high levels of self-efficacy, management of writing anxiety, and writing productivity in the pre-intervention Self-Report Questionnaire and interview, were already practicing intervention techniques to manage and mitigate “stuckness” that could be taken as lay mindfulness (where “stuckness” is defined as an inability to move forward in the writing and/or navigate around or through development hurdles, revision, and idea reimagining). Though they never termed these awarenesses as “mindfulness” without prompting, both Jamie and Mark’s interviews make clear that they were engaged in practicing deep and flexible awarenesses of themselves as writers prior to their involvement in the mindfulness intervention program, and that these awarenesses were developed as a result of non-academic pursuits.

Though she spoke about her desire to “find the Zen” or “balance” and to more effectively manage the anxiety surrounding her academic writing (“I’m a very high-stressed person...to the point where it becomes physical...like I have difficulty falling asleep and staying asleep.”), Jamie was able to consistently and concisely describe the set of management techniques, or

“system,” that helped her manage her efficacy and productivity as an academic and dissertation writer. This system included making lists, stepping away from her work, conferring with her partner (who is also a doctoral candidate), and coming back with “fresh eyes.” Likening the instinct to step away to her athletic training, Jamie described the difference between “good pain and bad pain” when training, where certain kinds of physical pain can indicate stretching and healthy exertion, while other kinds of pain portend impending injury that could “make it worse.” Jamie also identified that the instinct to “pull back” from her writing had become her necessary response to “bad frustration...where I say something and I’m not sure how to say it and I’ve already tried to say it fifteen other times or other ways.”

Similarly, Mark, an experienced practitioner of tai chi and qigong and a well-published fiction writer in his life beyond and prior to the doctoral program, described the connection between his engagement with Daoist philosophy of the “yin and yang” balance or “intermingling” between “retreating movement” and “strikes” and his practice of “writing through” moments of writing block. Like Jamie, Mark used the “fresh eyes” metaphor to explain the practice of “putting aside” pieces of writing in his pre-dissertation writing experiences: “I would write stuff that I was happy with and it would take me about maybe a month or so and I would set it aside...for a couple of months and come back to it...it was kind of a successful strategy for me.” Like Jamie, Mark’s descriptions of his writing and writing process are consistent and concise across the pre-, post-, and follow-up interviews.

Visible Difficulty

Though no interview data exists to support this (as the participant in question did not elect to take part in the interviews), I nonetheless spent considerable time in the middle portion of the field journal struggling with the in-practice ability of the workshop to support a non-

judgmental stance (per Research Question 1.a.); specifically, these field journal notes were concerned with the potential of the workshop to do harm and grew out of specific aspects of one individual's participation (an individual whom I was aware was in great emotional difficulties). Following a meeting with my dissertation advisor between the second and third workshop sessions, I noted the following in the field journal:

I am concerned about X's¹² participation; because of my friendship with them...I am aware that they are having a very, very hard time in their personal life this semester. Even if I didn't know this, I would already have felt disturbed about them - and I already *have* felt this - due to their visual representation of their response to the question "What do you think about when you think about your dissertation project?" during the first workshop session. Their image was of themselves, surrounded by flames, and in each flame was written a negative thought or doubt about their project and themselves as a writer (and they seems to have attached these doubts and negative thoughts to their own self).

I feel afraid of their difficulty, of the complexity of their difficulty. I feel that my workshop series must be inadequate to help them heal their doubts and their anxieties. I feel afraid of doing them more harm than good with my workshop; because I can't imagine that the practices that I offer in this workshop will be nearly enough to help them to mitigate their pain. What if they began the workshop thinking that it would help them feel better about what seem to be the larger issues in their life, and then they leave feeling disappointed and underserved and feel worse off than before?

My in-workshop interaction with the participant in question was limited, as they attended only two of the four intervention workshop sessions and completed only the pre-intervention Self-Report Questionnaire. However, my concerns, as both facilitator-researcher and human being,

felt very real and remained with me throughout the remainder of the intervention program and colored my subsequent interactions with other participants.

“Invisible Anxiety”

Luca and Clark, both doctoral students who were in course work at the time of the intervention program and who self-identified as multilingual writers, spoke at different points in the intervention program and interviews about a pervasive linguistic discomfort that they experienced with their pre-dissertation writing. During the second session of the mindfulness intervention program, Luca mentioned the “invisible anxiety” that he experienced as a multilingual writer (this comment was made in the context of a discussion of fears related to the dissertation project and a consideration of what freedom from these fears might look like). In the post-intervention interview, when asked if he could expand on this thinking, Luca decisively described this tension:

“Sometimes I feel that as a doctoral student...sometimes when I write I feel like I’m not writing like a professional. It’s my Eastern voice...I want to achieve that level of professional...standard. I should write very standard English, like my writing should be somehow scholarly writing. Sometimes I feel that I need to improve my professional skill of writing...So the style, you have the style, the tone, the voice, and especially the word choice of the diction that I need to learn, like how standard it should be.”

Echoing Luca’s concerns (though without my prompting), Clark described his difficulties in his stand-alone interview by dichotomizing his experience with that of mainstream writers, saying, “even writing professionals, even Americans, have problems with the same problems as me.”

In addition to the linguistic concerns that they described, Luca and Clark were the only interview participants to ask something of me as a facilitator-researcher; when invited to ask

final questions during their interviews (à la, “Those are all the questions I have; do you have any questions for me?”) (Appendices D and F) both Luca and Clark had questions concerning their negotiation of the doctoral program, as well as some more individual concerns. In his follow-up interview, Luca asked for advice about the process of negotiating with doctoral program faculty, more generally, and about the ease of working with a specific faculty member as a dissertation committee member. Following this, Luca made queries concerning the negotiation of a step in the pre-dissertation process that is specific to our doctoral program, asking for advice about drafting and revision. Clark, in his turn, asked detailed questions during his stand-alone interview about the dissertation process of our doctoral program, and also my personal yoga practice and how he could negotiate Western conceptions of masculinity to establish his own yoga practice in a public studio or class setting.

“Get Yourself in a Really Good Writing Headspace”

Across the post-intervention interviews, yogic movement and meditation (both intention- and breath-focused) were the most frequently identified practices when participants were asked to describe their experiences of the mindfulness workshop (Appendix D); these were also the practices that participants most frequently described as being conducive to entering into their own writing. The yogic movements in the workshop were rooted in a sequence of simple standing and seated poses, while the meditation practices varied from present-centered, breath-focused awareness to intention setting and loving-kindness (Chapter 3 and Appendix G).

Speaking about the yoga – and suggesting the qualities of self-efficacy and management of writing anxiety detailed in the first of this study’s Research Questions – Luca, whose prior experience with yogic movement and breathing was embedded in his own religious training, described that he felt “empowered, I felt it. I could feel something. When I wrote...I could

accomplish more than usual.” Similarly, Mark described feeling “focused” when he transitioned from the yoga and mindful breathing practices to his writing and revision activities during the workshop sessions. In his stand-alone interview, Clark identified that practicing yogic stretches prior to writing enabled him to better “concentrate on writing, to concentrate on what I’m doing now;” Clark also expressed specific interest in developing and pursuing a yoga practice in his own life as a result of his experiences in the workshop (see above and below).

Speaking about the meditation (or “breathing” as some participants termed it¹³), Bartholomew’s response suggests the mind-body connection and unintentionally invokes Research Question 1.a. (concerning the impact on writing productivity of a present-centered, non-judgmental stance) when he notes that “the meditation, the breathing...the not thinking about writing is what helps with the writing because it calms the brain, it settles the brain.” (Bartholomew’s feedback also suggests that the contexts surrounding writing are highly impactful on writing activities and productivity; this suggested is discussed below.) Jamie invokes the Research Questions in a similar way when she describes feeling supported to “...just be in the moment, right here...and so I shouldn’t feel guilty for not reading all these (student) papers when I was sitting and trying to get my (dissertation) proposal in order.”

“I Feel Like A Writer”

The emergence in the qualitative data of a practice mindful self-identification recalls the self-awareness initially forwarded in Research Question 1.b. and the suggests that a program of mindfulness intervention may support advanced academic writers who are also struggling to connect or relate to their dissertation projects on an personal level by first supporting their self-efficacy, the management of writing anxiety, and writing productivity. This suggestion is illustrated with particular clarity in the descriptions of Lena and Bartholomew.

Speaking in her post-intervention interview, Lena invokes a newly evolved sense of herself as a dissertation writer when she describes her new self-efficacy and writing productivity:

In the first ever workshop, I wrote a few pages and that felt really great, and then the next workshop, I wrote a little bit more. And then after that, again, I did a little bit more and a little bit more and now I have something. I feel like...I'm empowered now to just do it, now that I started it's just so much easier.

These expressions stand in stark contrast to the “fear and insecurity” that Lena had previously described when discussing her dissertation writing. When asked in her follow-up interview to describe how she felt that she had arrived at these increased levels self-efficacy and productivity, Lena identified that the workshop sessions offered her the “non-judgmental” environment and “structure” that had been lacking in her dissatisfying and unproductive earlier dissertation-centric academic experiences.

Similarly, Bartholomew, a dissertation writer who, in his pre-intervention interview, described both a difficulty “starting” and “keeping going” with his dissertation writing and feelings of being “distanced” and “disconnected” from both his academic community and his dissertation project, described greater stability and a writerly identity in his follow-up interview:

I'm doing what I'm calling a “three, two, one.”...where I just work non-stop on writing for three hours. Not even like reading anything, just writing for a three hour block...and then taking a break to either eat, usually I eat for an hour and then a two hour break, and then I write for two hours and then...I either do exercising or yoga...and the last hour, I'm going to wrap up any major ideas that came up so I don't forget them...Mentally, I feel happier and I'm pretty sure that's going to make the writing process a lot better...So

that's where I am now. So that feels really good to be able to create (something)...I feel like a writer.

Both Lena and Bartholomew's borrowing and individual operationalization of the structure offered by the workshop in their own lives as dissertation writers, as well as the positive impacts of these practices on their self-identification as writers (where identifying as a "writer" appears to be inextricably linked with being a *productive* writer), further recalls the concern of Research Question 1.b. with supporting advanced academic writers' development of sustainable, long-term writing practices that can be carried into future writing contexts.

"We Are All The Same"

Across the post-intervention interviews (including in Clark's post-intervention-timed stand-alone interview), participants described the workshop sessions as an antidote to the "isolation" of the dissertation writing process. Particularly, participants expressed three distinct responses to the question "What was it like to be in the room and go through the workshop with people who had such a variety of responses to and experiences with the workshop and practices?": affirmation and motivation, support, and self-confirmation.

In their post-intervention and stand-alone interviews (respectively), Luca and Clark described the motivation and affirmation that they experienced as individual members of the larger group of workshop writers. Speaking about his awareness of the other participants, Luca invoked the self-compassion and –monitoring forward in the Research Questions when he described that he "felt at oneness with them, that we were all having a journey together on the same boat...I felt the oneness, and sometimes I felt that we have the same destination, but we are running with different speeds...It was motivating for me." Clark expressed a similar sense of motivating affirmation as a dissertation writer who was still in coursework when he noted that

“the best thing is that in sharing some of their ideas and information about dissertation writing, I could feel like this anxiety is not only second-year people.” Further mirroring Luca’s sense of affirmation, Clark noted that being in the room with a participant who had been publicly recognized as a high-achieving doctoral candidate in our program made him feel that “even this kind of person can have, can feel a problem with his dissertation project. That kind of thing made me a little relieved. This is natural. I don’t have to worry about my dissertation... We are all the same.”

Speaking from the perspective of writers who had, per their own descriptions, struggled to engage in or connect with their writing, Lena and Bartholomew described the atmosphere of support and compassion in the workshop sessions. Contrasting her workshop experience with past experiences within her department, Lena noted that “there was an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding” amongst the participants and that this “really helped because I didn’t feel like I judged for being overwhelmed by (the dissertation).” Reflecting on the use of descriptive language and “feeling words” that were an integral part of the workshop discussions, Bartholomew describes that “a lot of the things people were talking about were things...that I’d never vocalized before...I think people sharing different experiences actually was a benefit that – if everyone agreed and everyone felt the same way, we would just sit there and nod and it would not make us think critically about how we actually do feel.”

For Mark and Jamie, writers who reported moderate to moderate-high levels of self-efficacy, management of writing anxiety, and writing productivity in the pre-intervention Self-Report Questionnaire, the presence of other writers in the workshop sessions served as confirmation of their established writing habits and individual experiences. Speaking about the sense of “being quiet” and individual “focusing” that was made possible by being in a group of

people who also intended to engage in writing activities, Mark explained that there was a sense in the workshop sessions that “we all know that we’re about to go write, so there isn’t much breaking the focus.” Reflecting on the perspective granted to her from her experience of working and writing alongside the other participants, Jamie described:

I (had been) so in my own head...You just get wrapped up in your own stress and anxiety or whatever. But then, being in the same room with other people, it’s kind of, you know, cool in a weird way to be like ‘Okay, everybody else has these problems, too’...I was grateful...I am grateful that I’m not faced with some of the experiences of other people in terms of feeling worthless or feeling like their idea is not super good enough...That’s the sort of perspective I gained...knowing that other perspectives and giving voice to the different things...that...was a bit liberating.

While these responses are indicative of individual histories, tendencies, and concerns, these responses, when taken together, particularly invoke both Research Questions 1 in terms of the self-efficacy, management of writing anxiety, and self-compassion that were hoped-for by-products of participation in the intervention program and Question 1.a. in the broader present-centered and non-judgmental stance encouraged by the program of mindfulness intervention. Further, these responses suggest that engaging with a community of advanced academic writer from diverse educational backgrounds and who have a variety of writing practices may support participants’ transfer of healthy writing practices into their future lives.

Discussion

A community of writers. One of the most striking findings in the qualitative results is the way in which participation in the program of mindfulness intervention may have acted on more than participants self-efficacy, management of writing anxiety, and dissertation writing

productivity; the qualitative results suggest that participating in the intervention program created for participants a solidarity and doing-away-with of the loneliness that so often results from the highly individual writing activities involved in the dissertation process. Particularly in a cultural climate in which loneliness is supported by the use of some of the very technologies on which advanced academic writers rely, and where such loneliness has been found to have a physical toll on sufferers – recent psychological studies suggest that persistent loneliness can contribute to depression (Bergland, 2015), memory loss (Cole et al., 2015), and even premature death (Cole et al., 2015) – the creation and support of present-centered and non-judgemental communities among advanced academic writers is important not only to begin to counter the crisis of attrition, but to support these individuals in healthful and sustainable ways of being.

A critical component in the success of the intervention program-as-community is that each workshop session constituted a meeting of writers who were interested in alternative methods of supporting and being supported in their own efficacy, management of writing anxiety, and dissertation writing productivity; within and across these meetings, participants developed a “shared metalanguage” (Maher et al, 2008, p. 274) of awareness, self-monitoring, and self-compassion that seemed, at least during the intervention program, to give them a way to talk about their dissertation projects and themselves as dissertation writers that went beyond the more traditional narrative of the overworked and overburdened academic. Additionally, the participant population may or may not have included individuals who were experiencing struggles disconnected to their writing (for example, it is possible that participants had individual experiences of depression, anxiety, or compulsion, to name but a few of the emotional struggles faced by graduate students) (Pyral, 2016; Vitale, 2016); however, at no time were the workshop sessions advertised or conducted as group therapy sessions. For while this study recognizes

cognitive-behavioral therapies as the gold standard of mental health care, it would have been disingenuous in the extreme for the workshop to claim to offer such a level of care. Per the examples of O'Reilly (1998), Kirsch (2008), and Wenger (2015), the goal of the mindfulness intervention program was, more simply, to support advanced academic writers in their development of mindful and sustainable writing practices, with the implicit understanding that these writers were also human beings with rich and varied inner lives.

“What’s going on beyond the writing.” While the quantitative and qualitative results indicate that participants’ self-efficacy, management of writing, anxiety, self-compassion, mindfulness, and dissertation writing productivity improved following exposure to the program’s awareness-raising mindfulness practices, the qualitative results indicate an additional factor that impacted participants’ positive reception of the program. The participants’ post-intervention and follow-up interviews reveal that there was a not-quite-traditionally academic dynamic among the community of writers through which writers were able not only to relate to each other, but to address some of the conditions *surrounding* their high stakes writing activities, as well. Speaking about her status as the only non-English Department participant and invoking her difficult previous experiences with advanced academic writers in her own department, Lena described her experience of the human component of the workshop sessions as feeling “a deep kinship...like there was someone there who got it.” Contrasting this workshop with more traditional writing group approaches in which participants exchange drafts (detailed in Chapter 1), Bartholomew expands on this sense of alternative community:

...I don’t think that works. I think just being around people to talk about your process or how you’re feeling and sharing the struggle, that is actually more productive or more

beneficial to the writing process than actually talking about what you're writing about... That's a huge difference from what I'm used to.

Though the precise extent of the impact of workshop session participation on supporting advanced academic writers in negotiating the conditions surrounding their writing is unclear, Lena and Bartholomew's feedback, as well as the Luca, Clark, and Jamie's feedback (above), suggest that it is possible to design a mindfulness intervention program to explicitly target these external conditions by focusing sessions around participants' own experiences of engaging in the writing (rather than, for example, building sessions around examining written texts or modeling revision techniques, as has been the case in some extant models of graduate writer support). However, given participants' quantitative and qualitative responses in this study, it is clear that *both* the mindfulness practices themselves and the design of the intervention program and workshops were effective for participants.

Honoring each other's intentions. In retrospect, an interesting feature of the interviews was the unexpected expectations of some of the interview participants concerning their use of my expertise (Powell & Takayoshi, 2003); I do not, however, speak here of my burgeoning expertise with mindfulness practices. When I designed the study and accounted for my own ethos as the facilitator of a mindfulness intervention program ("Facilitator ethos" and "Secular Outgrowths of MBSR," above); did not account for my ethos as an advanced doctoral candidate working with more junior students of the same program. Further, I did not account for my ethos as biracial, functionally bilingual writer with a discomfort with western culture whose visible ethos is nonetheless that of a mainstream, white, cisgender, Western culturally-fluent writer. I found it surprising, then, that in two particular instances, participants sought to benefit (Powell & Takayoshi, 2003, p. 394) from their work with me in unexpected ways.

As discussed above, when invited to ask final questions during their interviews, Luca and Clark asked questions that called upon, not my burgeoning expertise with mindfulness practices – the expertise on which my ethos as facilitator-research of the present study had been ostensibly built – but on my experiences as western-culturally fluent, mainstream, female yoga-practicing, advanced doctoral candidate;¹⁴ in short, all of the identity markers that, similar to Powell and Takayoshi (2003), I had not thought to account for in my own careful considerations prior to the start of the intervention program. At no time did Luca or Clark’s questions seem inappropriate – indeed, as Powell and Takayoshi (2003) note, “paying attention to the ways in which subjects often make wholly appropriate demands on the expertise or humanity of researchers is an important principle of ethical research” (p. 400) – it was only that the questions seemed, at the time, a bit oddly timed (occurring, as they did, in the context of an interview surrounding their participation in a program of mindfulness intervention). An additional curiosity was that, in the case of the dissertation committee member-specific questions that Luca posed, I could not offer any useful information because I had not worked with the faculty member he was interested in (a fact of which Luca would have been aware, as he had previously attended an formal, public event where I had defended the first half of my dissertation for my committee members).

It is only in retrospect that I am able to more fully appreciate these unique occurrence for the revealing moments that they are. Per Table 1, Luca and Clark are the only interview participants who were still in coursework at the time of the intervention program (all of the other interview participants were out of coursework and had been teaching at our university for at least a semester by the beginning of the intervention program). It is possible that between their status as more junior doctoral candidates and their identification as multilingual writers (with the anxieties noted above in “Invisible Anxieties”), they may have viewed me as a reliable source of

information or aid via my extra-mindfulness identity markers (noted above). This explanation is further borne out by the fact that the remaining interview participants, all of whom were more senior doctoral candidates (well-out of coursework) and mainstream writers, did not “demand” (Powell & Takayoshi, 2003, p. 400) anything explicit of me; they did not ask for advice or help. If these latter participants asked questions at all during the interviews, they were limited to interest in the data collection and analysis procedures, though in a seemingly cursory and polite conversational way.

Of note here is the final “intention” that I set as the facilitator-researcher in the last lines of Chapter 2 of this document; that, ultimately, participants’ goals for their participation in the intervention study and related data collection procedures were not up to me, be they related to community-building, sustaining research karma, or, as in the case of Luca and Clark, addressing questions of how to navigate academic contexts or wellness concerns. Further, if, as I note in this earlier portion of the text, participants came to their intentions consciously and with awareness, and my support of those intentions is harmful to no one, then it is not appropriate for me, as the facilitator-researcher, *not* to honor those intentions.

Qui bono? It is useful when discussing an intervention program to consider whom of a general population might to benefit most from participation. When considered within the specific context of the present study (a more general discussion follows in Chapter 6), participation seemed most to benefit the writers who, for a variety of reasons, either did not self-identify as writers or self-identified as struggling or not-proficient writers at the start of the intervention program (in this case, Bartholomew, Lena, Clark, and Luca). (As discussed above, Jamie and Mark benefitted from already-well established lay mindfulness practices that supported their self-efficacy, management, and writing productivity.) In all four cases, participants expressed

feelings of satisfaction concerning their participation in the mindfulness intervention program, describing increased efficacy, management of writing anxieties, and writing productivity, as well as a growth in that intangible sense of themselves as writers. Conversely, in their interview responses, Jamie and Mark expressed pleasure at having participated in the program, but noted that their management strategies continued mostly unaltered. Already strong writers in their own right, with histories of successful management strategies and awareful grasps on their own efficacy as writers, Jamie and Clark seemed to benefit least from their participation.

This division is not surprising, given the exigencies that originally led Kabat-Zinn (2011) to develop the MBSR intervention approach (one of the philosophies on which this study is based); designed to serve the unmet needs of the approximately 80-90% of patients who did not respond favorably to traditional medical interventions (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 293), mindfulness-based stress reduction and its sister programs were meant to ‘catch’ the people who were falling through the cracks of the established medical system. In this metaphor, Jamie and Clark are largely not falling through the cracks, but rather have been visiting their physicians and finding success with their prescribed treatments, whereas Bartholomew, Lena, Clark, and Luca are individuals who have visited traditional physicians and not found satisfying levels of success with traditional treatments. Both the attrition-related studies discussed above (Bair & Haworth, 1999; Gardner, 2008; Ehrenberg et al, 2007) and the present study suggest that the percentage of doctoral candidates who fall into this latter category is large, perhaps even catastrophic. However, this is an area that deserves further research before definitive statements can be made and interventions suggested.

Finally, there is the question of openness, which can be seen in this study through participants’ responses to the pre-intervention question “Describe your interest in the program.”

Where, for example, Bartholomew and Lena are very clear about their openness to the practices involved in the program, Mark verbalized just as clearly that he has chosen to participate out of a simple desire to support a fellow researcher's data collection. Further research is needed, however, to investigate whether the question of who benefits from participation in a program of mindfulness intervention may, truly or in part, be an question of mindsets.

Findings that deserve further scholarly attention. The qualitative data suggests a number of additional findings that deserve further scholarly attention; these are findings that, due to the scope of the IRB protocol for the present study, I could not pursue, but that should and hopefully will be looked at under similar study conditions.

Chief among the findings that deserve further scholarly attention is the utility of a program of mindfulness intervention to support the writing negotiation-related behaviors of, specifically, advanced multilingual academic writers. As seen above in the anxieties described by Luca and Clark (and consistent with the works of Grav and Cayley (2015) and Li (2007)), multilingual writers' concerns about writing in "standard English" and managing "writing problems" have very real consequences for inhibiting confidence, self-efficacy, and writing productivity. It is possible that, like Luca and Clark, other advanced multilingual academic writers from across the disciplines may benefit from a program of mindfulness intervention as a means of helping them to mitigate their own self-efficacy and writing anxiety, as well as to deepen their awareness of the benefits of a writing community and encourage a more positive stance toward their own linguistic diversity. An additional and related subject that deserves further scholarly attention is whether participation in a program of mindfulness intervention is useful in supporting multilingual writers' non-binary or non-deficit conceptualization of

themselves as strong and effective advanced academic writers (per Clark's dichotomous comments in "Invisible Anxiety," above).

The extent to which a program of mindfulness intervention may be employed to support advanced academic writers who are in emotional difficulties is similarly deserving of further scholarly attention. For though, as discussed above, the community atmosphere of the intervention workshop sessions seems effective in supporting the solidarity and countering some of the loneliness of advanced academic writers who are engaged in high stakes writing, the workshop is designed as neither a substitute for cognitive-behavioral therapy nor as a true mindfulness-based cognitive therapy in itself. Further concerted research is necessary to understand if it is possible that participation in a program of mindfulness intervention may support the management or negotiation by advanced academic writers of emotional difficulties, whether in encouraging a counter-narrative to the "deficit thinking" that often characterizes such experiences or in providing them with a healthful community (or else, in some other as unknown way).

Analogously, the questions of how best to support participants' metacognitive awareness of (1) their existing (lay) mindfulness practices or (2) their development of mindfulness practices through program participation deserve further concerted scholarly attention. The qualitative results suggest that in supporting advanced academic writers who are struggling with self-efficacy, the management of writing anxiety, and writing productivity, we may also be supporting these writers' development of sustainable, long-term writing practices that can be carried into their future lives as healthy and productive faculty members. However, the precise extent to which this support also supports explicitly metacognitive awareness is, as yet, unclear.

Per Lena's experience as the only non-English Department participant, further scholarly attention is also necessary to understand the extent to which anonymity (or the quality of being unknown to most of the other participants by virtue of being in a different academic program) may be supportive of participants' greater receptivity to or benefit from participation in the program of mindfulness intervention. Relatedly, as the present intervention program was only interdisciplinary in terms of including participants from more than one English discipline (beyond Lena), further concerted research is necessary to assess the extent to which the interdisciplinarity of a program of mindfulness intervention may be beneficial to a greater number of participants from across the disciplines.

Finally, this study raises questions concerning the larger structures in which advanced academic writers engage in high stakes writing; specifically, this study highlights the existence of larger organizational structures or frameworks that demand productivity of those who would join it while simultaneously offering precious little support for those labors. For the advanced academic writers in this study, some of these external demands came from departments and programs, while others came from individual advisors; nevertheless, participants' qualitative responses suggest that they have may internalized these demands and values to varying degrees.

Though it was never the intention of this study to support the frameworks in which some of these writers experienced struggle, it is clear that this study at once reproduces and disrupts these existing frameworks in its support of advanced academic writer participants. In honoring participants' own intentions regarding, among other things, their productivity (Chapter 2), the study may have implicitly reproduced – or, at minimum, reinforced – the frameworks that locate the value of advanced academic writers in their abilities to be productive scholars. However, in supporting participants' mindfulness practices – practices which themselves invite deep

awareness of and critically conscious engagement with the environments in which we live and work – this study also may have disrupted larger narratives of ‘intervention for production’s sake’ by equipping participants’ with practices through which they themselves could engage with and disrupt these narratives. While further scholarly attention is necessary to assess the precise extents and larger impacts of these reproductive and disruptive moves, it is hoped that, on balance, any reinforcement of existing structures was outweighed by the two layers of disruption, and that participants were supported more in their critical consciousness and awareness than in a single-minded focus on productivity. Additionally, on a broader scale, this study suggests that engaging in mindfulness practices has broader positive impacts on the health, healthy interaction with each other, and more healthful interactions with academic labor of advanced academic writers within larger unhealthy systems; however, the extent of these impacts (as well as the impacts of individual mindfulness practice on larger systems that support and reinforce workaholism) is similarly unclear and deserves further scholarly attention.

Program revisions. The unmistakable patterns of growth detailed in this and the previous chapters strongly suggest that regular mindfulness intervention, over a longer period of time, may result in larger and more sustained gains for participants in their feelings of self-efficacy, management of writing anxiety, practices of self-compassion, mindfulness, and dissertation writing productivity. Across the post-intervention interviews, participants expressed the view that the program needed to “be longer;” that is to say, in their interviews, four of the six interview participants identified that they felt they would have benefitted even more from increased exposure to the workshop concepts. Overall, participants expressed three distinct views about revising the program: An intervention program that meets once weekly for more weeks during the semester; an intervention program that incorporates longer intervals of mindful

writing; and an intervention program that is a more formalized integrated part of the doctoral student experience.

A semester-long program. Speaking about the need for a minimum of one month of workshop sessions, rather than a single, “one-time” session, Lena described her sense that she was able to develop “habits” with her writing as a result of the structure surrounding her participation:

The fact that it was a month, I think, helped to develop a habit and kind of get used to working on it. So I think if it was a one-time deal, I think I would have been productive but then kind of – if there wasn’t reinforcement – I would eventually just stopped. I would have stopped trying.

Lena further expressed the view that more time in a workshop setting would consequently lead to larger gains for participants:

I know it’s only a month, but even if it was longer I think that would be even more helpful because I think for - some people who need more time to develop a habit. And then the acceptance, camaraderie, all of that – maybe if it was two months, maybe people would be even farther along.

In terms of revising for the duration of the intervention program, it may be helpful for participants (particularly for those participants who have been struggling with confidence concerning their dissertation projects) if the program spanned the length of the regular semester, with regularly scheduled weekly sessions.

Longer intervals of mindful writing. Lena’s concerns about the duration of the larger intervention program are echoed in Mark and Jamie’s concerns about the length of the 10-minute intervals of mindful writing that comprise the second half of workshop sessions (Appendix G).

In Mark's view, "the writing intervals were too short," while Jamie expands that "ten minutes to me is so fast; like I start to get into an idea and then you have to stop." Within the contexts of the suggested semester-long intervention program – if the non-writing interval activities are maintained (and participants' positive responses to these activities suggest that they should be) – revising the each workshop session to be longer increases the amount of time that can be devoted to longer intervals of mindful writing. Where the sessions in the present study ran for 90 minutes and included two to three 10-minute intervals of mindful writing, increasing the runtime of the sessions to 120 minutes doubles the amount of time that can be devoted to mindful writing activities; specifically, a two-hour program can be revised to include 60 minutes of mindful writing, parceled out into 20-minute intervals.

Alternatively, Mark and Jamie's feedback suggests that a more concentrated, retreat-style intervention program may be beneficial. Detailed more fully in Chapter 6, a retreat-style would be most effective for writers who feel more confident in their self-efficacy and writing productivity and who may simply need a contemplative venue in which to write or ground their already-mostly effective management of their writing anxiety (in the context of the present study, these latter individuals are writers like Jamie).

A formalized, integrated program. The final major revision to the program of mindfulness intervention is owed to Bartholomew's description of his sense that the program that comprised the present study felt like a piece of a larger whole: "I could see how I could benefit from it if it was an official, fleshed out program and not a very limited – it was almost like a sampler, it was like a really nice little sampler." As is discussed in Chapter 6, integrating a program of mindfulness intervention into a larger, formalized graduate program offers participants all of the benefits of the present program, with one important addition: where the

present program of mindfulness intervention represents the research of an interested doctoral candidate (with a supportive dissertation committee), a formalized, integrated program may serve to validate advanced academic writers' struggles with high stakes writing as real and worthy of institutional support. A formalized, integrated program could adapt any of the program organizations proposed by this project; a once-weekly, month-long program at the start of a semester; a once-weekly, semester-long extracurricular program; a once- or twice-weekly semester-long "course;" a regularly offered retreat-style program. In keeping with the intentions of the present study (which, in its turn, strives to be consistent with broader and more traditional Zen Buddhist intentions), the two most important caveats in a formalized, integrated program are (1) that the program be sponsored by the graduate program or university and (2) that participation must, at all times, be non-compulsory.

CHAPTER 6

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The present research project owes a great deal to the contemplative Composition scholars who have labored for decades to bring greater awareness and compassion to what we in Composition teach and study. This study benefits from the implicit attention to the conditions surrounding the act of writing that are highlighted by the work of Elbow (2000), Blitz and Hurlbert (1998), Hurlbert (2012), and Kroll (1992), among others, and owes its present and gentle orientations toward participants' inner lives to the explicitly contemplative pedagogies of O'Reilley (1993), Kirsch (2008 & 2009), Kroll (2013), Wenger (2015), and Yagelski (2011). The approach taken by the present study builds on these earlier approaches by combining these implicit and explicit models and suggests a new (or very old) way forward toward effectively supporting the self-efficacy, management of writing anxiety, and writing productivity of not just advanced academic writers, but also undergraduate and faculty writers.

In order to begin to bridge the gap between what we in Composition know about how best to support advanced academic writers who are engaged in high stakes writing, as well as how we might begin to counter the current crisis of attrition among doctoral candidates, this study has explored the ways in which mindfulness intervention may be employed to both successfully support the writing practices of these writers and as a program that assesses its own effectiveness. Particularly, this study has attempted to operationalize O'Reilley's (1998) call for the creation of an emotionally healthy and spiritually supportive academic environment in which a program of mindfulness intervention supports the "present-centered," "non-judgmental," and

self-compassionate (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 6) writing habits of advanced academic writers.

In the most immediate sense, this study increases what we in Composition now know and understand about both the writing practices of advanced academic writers engaged in high stakes writing and the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions in supporting these writers' self-efficacy, management of writing anxiety, and writing productivity. And even while it suggests a number of evidence-based methods for supporting these writers, this study also indicates that increased scholarly attention to graduate writers generally and dissertation writers specifically is substantially warranted (populations who are, per the results of the present study, accurately described elsewhere in this text as "in-need, at-risk university writers"). Additionally, per Li (2007) and Grav and Cayley (2015), the results of this research suggest that the field of Composition would benefit from wider considerations of evidence-based and non-deficit oriented methods of support for the writing negotiations of multilingual writers as they write both within and beyond the field of Composition. Specifically, this study suggests that multilingual writers, particularly advanced multilingual writers, may benefit from integrated, peer-run intervention programs which are sponsored or endorsed by graduate programs and through which they have easier access to more senior students of the same program.

A wider implication of the present study pertains to methods of support for undergraduate and faculty writers. For undergraduate writers, many of whom are first-generation college students and unfamiliar with the demands and expectations of a university workload, the present study suggests not only methods of intervention, but also methods to more effectively employ mindfulness strategies in writing-intensive courses or in other academic contexts in which undergraduate writers pursue high stakes writing of their own, such as capstone courses or

undergraduate honors thesis writing. Applicable to all levels of undergraduate study, these strategies suggest themselves as support for generative writing or freewriting, the composition of sustained projects, research, peer feedback, revision, and reflection. For faculty writers, who are themselves former dissertation writers and labor under similar time, work, and life constraints and demands as dissertation writers, the present study suggests the substantial benefits that could come from faculty-level Writing Across the Curriculum initiatives designed to support the high stakes pre-tenure, tenure-, publication-, or promotion-related writing activities of these highly advanced writers.

Based in the above discussions of the methods that were and were less effective for participants in the present study, this chapter explores how this new knowledge may be applied to the larger body of advanced academic writers whom we in the field of Composition seek to support by both forwarding specific evidence-based recommendations at the programmatic level and examining the adaptability and portability of this method of mindfulness intervention across academic contexts. This chapter begins by detailing avenues for future research and evidence-based recommendations that are suggested by this study for programs that house graduate writers as they attempt to support these writers in the face of the current crisis of attrition. In order to make the methods used in the present study accessible for other interested Composition researchers, writing program administrators, and writing center directors, this chapter concludes by describing key considerations through which the program of mindfulness intervention may be made portable and adaptable to support advanced academic writers in a variety of contexts.

Immediate Implications for Programs Housing Graduate Student Writers

This study has immediate implications for how programs that house and support graduate student writers may validate these writers' struggles with high stakes writing as real and worthy

of institutional support; understanding these implications is vital in reducing and stabilizing dissertation completion rates, reducing graduate school burnout, and equipping graduate student writers with tools that may reduce the likelihood that they will succumb to faculty burnout later in their careers. Specifically, the results of this study suggest recommendations for graduate and doctoral programs.

Vital benefits for MA. and Ph.D. writers. The results of the study suggest two clear avenues for support that can be most appropriately facilitated at the level of writing-intensive M.A. and Ph.D. programs: the extracurricular intervention workshop or the more formalized and credit-bearing mindfulness and writing course. The critical component of both of these avenues is the same; a program-supported and -instituted mindfulness intervention validates (1) the writers' experiences of difficulty and (2) the intervention practices as real and valuable. Thought of another way, a program-instituted mindfulness intervention communicates to students, "We (the program) want you to succeed and be well, and this is a way that has been shown to help advanced academic writers succeed and be well."¹⁵ In these programmatic contexts, a formalized, integrated mindfulness intervention fosters attitudes that are consistent with and replicable for graduate writers' futures as healthy and productive faculty members.

Specific considerations. In the case of an extracurricular intervention workshop, participation must always be optional and may be recommended by supervising faculty members to graduate writers who appear to be struggling. The organization and length of such a workshop could be fitted into and around existing course schedules and such an inclusion need not necessitate wider programmatic revisions. In the case of a more formalized and credit-bearing mindfulness and writing course, the possibilities are greater; for while its inclusion in a graduate program may lead to a reexamining of programmatic expectations, orientations, and outcomes,

such a step makes possible the combining of mindfulness strategies with other connected or similar methods of self-care or well-being, and invites both students and faculty to participate in a program culture of greater wellness.

In the company of their fellows. The results of the study also suggest a secondary consideration for such programmatic adaptations of a program of mindfulness intervention concerning the populations involved. The present study reinforces earlier findings (including those of Cuthbert and Spark (2008)) concerning the organization and population of an intervention program of this kind, in that participants' discursive needs are best served when they are in the company of their fellows. That is to say, writing-intensive M.A. and Ph.D. programs may most effectively meet the needs of their students by offering separate interventions for M.A. and Ph.D. writers (and, as is discussed below, for faculty writers); as Luca eloquently notes (in Chapter 5), participants are able to experience greater solidarity with each other in such contexts, as if they are all "having a journey together in the same boat...we have the same destination." Pursuant to this thinking, however, is an important caveat: The qualitative results of the study suggest that separating multilingual from mainstream writers, or else stronger or more confident writers from weaker or less confident writers, may not be as effective as opening participation to all writers within a specific educational level. The qualitative results in this study (particularly the interviews) suggest that the very bringing together of all of these writers – in all of their linguistic and able varieties – in a room to think, talk, move, and write together is supportive of more conducive, effective, and mindful intervention sessions.

A Portable Program of Mindfulness Intervention

Moving beyond the context of graduate student writers, and in order to more broadly support other interested Composition researchers, writing program administrators, and writing

center directors in their efforts to support academic writers in a variety of contexts, the remaining discussion presents a portable program of mindfulness intervention that can be adapted in various sites for a variety of academic writers. Organized around the themes of “things to keep in mind,” “what you can do,” and “who would benefit from this,” the discussion of portability first presents critical philosophical considerations that should guide the best use of these models and follows with specific models of use for adaptation in writing centers, WAC/WID programs, and learning and support programs, with implications for serving the needs of for dissertation and thesis writers, faculty writers, and undergraduate writers.

Critical philosophical considerations. While the documents that were used to conduct the mindfulness program workshop sessions can be found in Appendix F and adapted for the programs below, an essential component in the portability of the program of mindfulness intervention is that, like any intervention or treatment, its use and adaptation must be done responsibly and in as-full-as-possible awareness of the historical, philosophical, and material contexts involved (discussed in Chapter 2). Responsible adaptation of the program of mindfulness intervention to new or similar contexts rests on three key philosophical considerations: The language employed surrounding and during the intervention program, the practices that constitute the program, and the intentions and authenticity of the facilitators themselves.

Language. The language that is employed surrounding and over the course of the program of mindfulness intervention is critical to its effective support of participants’ writing processes. To begin, presenting the program as a *practice* is essential. Similar to Kabat-Zinn’s (2011) insistence on an “operational” (rather than static) definition of mindfulness as fluid and responsive (p. 291), and as is illustrated in the experiences of participants in this study

(particularly those of Lena and Bartholomew), the use of practice-oriented language (where mindfulness practice is a *practice* and not an outcome) encourages participants to view their relationship to their writing more as a journey in which they may explore both themselves and their subjects, rather than imagining it more reductively as a destination that they must reach. Couching the intervention program generally and each program session more specifically in practice-oriented language supports an environment and orientation of growth (Dweck, 2014), reducing the likelihood for the development of implicit expectations of immediate gain or fears of failure.

An attention to language is also important in distinguishing the mindfulness intervention program from other, less internally consistent and potentially damaging programs. Particularly when compared to the dissertation boot camp model (detailed in Chapter 1), the program of mindfulness intervention relies on language that is positive and consistently self-aware, and that focuses on present-mindedness and non-judgment to foster writers' own self-efficacy, management of writing anxiety, and writing productivity. Though it achieves similar outcomes of the "focused environment" and "social dimension" (Starfield, 2016, p. 193) claimed by some dissertation boot camps, the mindfulness intervention program does so without the problematic use of contradictory or militaristic language and the consequent potential for encouraging in participants an adversarial or binary conceptualization of the dissertation.

Of additional consideration is that facilitators may encounter language from participants that they may, at first, feel is contradictory to or inconsistent with the larger practice-orientation of the mindfulness intervention program. These instances of languaging may include negative self-talk or deficit-thinking concerning linguistic ability and in these circumstances, it is recommended that facilitators recall the "non-fixing orientation" (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 292-293)

that is one of the goals for participation in the intervention program. As the facilitator is also a co-participant (per ‘Intention and authenticity,’ below), facilitators may rely on the practice of hearing without fixing when confronted with participants’ difficult or problematizing self-descriptive languaging; in these circumstances, facilitators may best serve participants’ long-term mindfulness needs if they accept participants’ utterances as specific and situated and, importantly, not descriptive of a permanent state of being. As the results in the present study illustrate, participants who begin a program of mindfulness intervention engaging in negative self-talk or deficit-thinking may well emerge from the program with more positive, mindful, and compassionate perceptions of themselves; this growth is, however, largely dependent on whether a facilitator *allows* and makes space for participants to feel what they feel, when they feel it, and whether participants are given uninterrupted opportunities to discover in themselves new and unexpected abilities and insights.¹⁶

Practices. It is similarly essential to recall that the mindfulness practices implemented in the intervention program were adapted and designed with the purpose of supporting participants’ own practices of growth and wellness. Common among the practices that constitute mindful writing workshop sessions is that the practices are oriented toward self-healing (Kabat-Zinn, 2011); that is to say, these practices consistently foster and encourage participants’ *own* mental, physical, and intellectual engagement and metacognition, and at no time are practices prescriptive, deterministic, or closed-ended. As is illustrated by the present study, engagement with these practices encourages participants to “take better care of themselves” (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 293) by equipping them with practical and practicable strategies, practices, and tools that support their self-efficacy, management of writing anxiety, writing productivity, and overall wellness.

In terms of the writing and discussion portions of the mindful writing workshop sessions, freewriting prompts are low-stakes, generative, and open-ended (Appendix G), and verbal questions and promptings from the facilitator are designed to invite further development of comments from an individual participant or collaborative talk across workshop participants. Similarly, intervals of mindful writing invite participants – who may well be drawn to mindful writing workshops out of a desire to “get into” their high stakes writing (as were some participants in the present study) – to engage with their writing in a less stressful, lower-stakes environment in which engagement is more highly rewarded than production. These lower-stakes writing practices remove the barrier to writing activity that is often erected by anxious feelings and fear of failure, and make space for participants to simply engage and write.

The implementation of gentle yogic movement is similarly essential to successful adaptation of the mindful writing workshop in that participants are asked through these poses not only to move, but also to actively inhabit and experience the present moment by being aware of their movements and their physical bodies. Opening the yoga practice with “I invite you at this point to consider your feet – they take you everywhere you want to go, but you may not have noticed them when you got out of bed this morning – I invite you to look down and wiggle your toes, to flex your arches, and really *feel* what’s it’s like to have feet” invokes a quite higher level of engagement than does “And now we will stand and stretch to one side”; essential here is the mind-body awareness that can be embedded in these practices.

Finally, the practice of meditation is perhaps the most immediately impactful of the mindful workshop practices because it invites participants to engage directly with their interior selves (certainly participants’ interview responses suggest meditation as a high impact intervention practice). Meditation of this kind (which can also be called mindful breathing,

breath-focused meditation, or intention-focused meditation) supports participants' present-centered awareness, self-compassion, and meta-awareness by inviting them into a practice that is not common in our busy culture, that of stillness with the self. The maintenance of a quiet environment during the period of meditation (as well as during the period of freewriting) is similarly essential as it encourages contemplation, limits external distractions, and creates a safe and supported environment in which participants may engage with any internal distractions that may (and usually do) arise.

Intention and authenticity. Finally, it is important to recall and observe the commitments to “clear comprehension” and “right” living (Bodhi, 2011, p. 21) that are constituent parts of a mindfulness intervention of this kind in order to preserve the mindfulness intervention from the “denaturing” (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 4) effect that can result from the mass production of an intervention. Though the use of mindful and holistic language and self-healing oriented practices are essential to a successfully adapted program, the greatest concerns for adapting the program of mindfulness intervention to a new context are the attention to intention and authenticity that this work requires.

In terms of intention, it is important to remember that, per Kabat Zinn (2011) and similar to the self-healing orientation of the practices that constitute such a program, the essential purposes of a program of mindfulness intervention are to (1) reduce participants' suffering in the short term by providing them with the benefits associated with membership in a safe environment and constructive community, and (2) to equip participants with the tools with which they may heal themselves in the future. To separate the intervention program from these core purposes is to risk participating in and perpetuating the *mindlessness* that, in many ways, is responsible for participants' suffering in the first place. Examples of this perpetuation are visible

in the product-orientation that results when a mindfulness intervention program is presented purely as a means of increasing participants' writing productivity or when an academic writer is required or less-formally coerced by an advisor to attend a mindful writing workshop; these practices would denature the program's attention to participants' suffering and risk encouraging facilitators to forget or overlook the deeply humanistic reasons for such a program.

Similarly, successful adaptation of the mindfulness intervention program requires facilitators to recall Kabat-Zinn's (2011) entreaty that workshop leaders should also be authentic as practitioners; that is, in the present context, that workshop leaders should be prepared to engage in the workshop practices and activities *alongside* their participants and can and should join in discussions when it is appropriate (though not, of course, in a dominating way, but rather in a way that supports participants' own contributions). Analogously, facilitators will do well to recall the vulnerability suggested by Turner and Edwards' (2006) findings that productive mentor-mentee relationships must be equally (or, at least, mostly) participatory and be ready to, for example, share their own writing (and writing hurdles) with participants. Engaging with participants in this way validates participants' efforts, experimentations, and openness to vulnerability and, because there is always something to be gained from mindfulness practice (it is, as above, a *practice* and not an outcome), this effort on the part of the facilitator need never be inauthentic; following the precedent set by the leader of sitting meditation who also sits with their students, the leader of a mindfulness intervention workshop can also engage in the intervention practices.

Practical considerations for models of use. The discussion that follows examines how programs located in three different sites (writing centers, Writing Across the Curriculum/Writing in the Disciplines programs, and learning and support centers) can serve the needs of various

academic writers across the disciplines. While this examination presents specific, situated sites, the recommendations in the following sections may be combined and adapted further to support other writers in additional contexts. Of particular note here is that because the receipt of another individual's mindfulness-related thinking can weigh heavily upon a single listener (and because few of these listeners are likely to be trained in listener-supportive cognitive-behavioral therapies), it is recommended that any adaptation of either the present mindfulness intervention or of the models detailed below be conducted exclusively in group settings. Additionally (as discussed above), while facilitators of mindfulness interventions need not be certified yoga or meditation teachers or therapists themselves, it is useful for full and effective facilitation for facilitators to have some experience with movement- or breath-based awareness practices (be these religious or, as discussed in Chapter 5, lay practices of mindfulness or awareness).

Model 1: Writing centers. Differing from the discussion of how graduate programs may support their writers' awarenesses and writing productivity (above), a consideration of how writing centers may support writers from across the university stems from the reality that writing centers are often much less entrenched than other academic programs and may have greater flexibility to adapt their methods of writer support. Writing centers are also fertile ground for mindfulness interventions as the mentor or coach mentality that is most useful for facilitating such an intervention is often to be natively found in writing tutors.

A term- or semester-length program of mindfulness intervention is best suited to the context of the writing center; for the purposes of clarity, this program can best be understood as a workshop series. It is recommended that tutors who do not have existing experience with movement- or breath-based awareness practices seek preliminary mindfulness trainings from external sources and may then choose to take the role of workshop facilitator in turns. The

workshops should be offered consistently (in the same place, on the same day, and at the same time) regardless of the number of participants and should not exceed one meeting per week (more often than this may be a burden for both facilitators and participants). Further, participation need not be consistent to be permitted (i.e., writers may choose to attend only half of the sessions but still be welcome to all of them). The timing of the workshop series will depend largely on the target population of such an intervention model; for example, undergraduate and dissertation writers often have very different understandings concerning the boundaries of semesters, and workshop series for each of these populations should take these realities into account (this is discussed more fully below). In terms of the daily agenda of each session of the workshop series, it is recommended that facilitators adapt the lesson plans from the present study (Appendix G) and follow either the 90-minute organization detailed in those documents or the 2-hour organization discussed in Chapter 5 (“Longer intervals of mindful writing”). Additionally, given the results of the present study concerning the practices that were most effective for participants, workshop sessions should always include, at the least, freewriting, discussion, yoga and mindful breathing, and intervals of mindful writing.

Per the qualitative results of the present study, such an intervention is more likely to benefit academic writers who are struggling with their own efficacy, writing anxiety, and writing productivity; advertisement for the workshop series should be geared toward these individuals. Advertisements should begin well in advance and workshop sessions should be well advertised throughout the semester to encourage both new and continued participation. Though word-of-mouth advertisement is likely spread awareness of the workshop series fairly effectively throughout some populations of academic writers, it is recommended that writing center administrators reach out to faculty members who are teaching or advising academic writers and

advise them of the goals and utility of the workshop series for any of their struggling writers or advisees.

Mindfulness interventions based in writing centers, including the one detailed above, could serve the needs of a variety of academic writers, including dissertation and thesis writers, faculty writers, and undergraduate writers. Semester-long programs can be adapted for different groups of writers by adjusting the length of workshop sessions, the specific purpose that sessions attend to, and the specific practices that are implemented. (For example, while dissertation and thesis writers may benefit more from twice-monthly sessions, undergraduate writers may benefit best from once-weekly sessions and faculty writers may benefit most from once- or twice-monthly sessions.) Additionally, for graduate or faculty writers – who are, by virtue of their scholarly and academic activities, often largely immune to the boundaries of semesters and often do not require a cushion at the beginning and end of semesters to truly enter into their work – the workshop series should run the full length of the semester, whereas a workshop series that targets undergraduate writers may usefully begin meeting in Weeks 2 or 3 of the semester.

Model 2: WAC/WID programs. To support academic writers in a variety of settings, Writing Across the Curriculum/Writing in the Disciplines programs would most benefit from one of two models of support: a month-long, once-weekly workshop series or an interdisciplinary learning community-style program (either of these approaches may also be paired with the writing center program detailed above).

Similar to the model recommended for writing centers, a month-long, once-weekly intervention program provides academic writers with focused, non-compulsory mindfulness support and training that they can incorporate into their own writing routines. It is recommended that facilitators use the lesson plans from the present study as a guide (Appendix G) and that

sessions not exceed 90 minutes, and given the varied needs of academic writers, workshop sessions should always include, at the least, yoga and mindful breathing and intervals of mindful writing (freewriting and discussion should be incorporated if time permits). Workshop sessions should be offered consistently (in the same place, on the same day, and at the same time) in a space that is consistent with the advertised goals of the program (if, for example, the program is advertised as a “quiet space to be supported in your writing,” session should not be held in or near high traffic areas, but rather in a closed room in secluded areas on campus).

Alternatively, academic writers may benefit from a year-long interdisciplinary learning community-style program. A learning community-style program of mindfulness intervention provides members with a stable sense of community and support throughout writing processes that often span long intervals and involve months of close attention. And while all mindfulness programs are ideally based in face-to-face interactions, learning community programs also invite additional methods of support and connection; an academic writers’ learning community could share resources and support via an online group component (a Facebook group or a Google Doc Folder). A learning community-style program should meet at minimum, twice-monthly, and with the same consistency as the month-long intervention program detailed above. Sessions should not exceed 90 minutes and should include practices of freewriting, discussion, yoga and mindful breathing, and intervals of mindful writing. Additionally, as discussed above, if a learning community-style program is offered to academic writers as part of a formalized, integrated program of mindfulness intervention, the program should be credit-bearing.

While month-long, once-weekly intervention programs may best serve the needs of undergraduate writers in a variety of settings, year-long interdisciplinary learning community-style programs are well suited to serve the needs of faculty or undergraduate writers (including

undergraduate writers who are finishing senior theses or working on sustained research projects) and can easily be adjusted to meet the needs of either group. Particularly in terms of faculty writing workshops, including a faculty writers' learning community, members may meet at the group's discretion and because faculty writers are usually better funded than student writers, gatherings may occur in local, non-academic spaces where members will run less risk of encountering campus-related distractions (off-campus coffee shops or public libraries). Additionally, if it is a smaller group, book club-style meetings may be preferred (where each meeting rotates between members' homes and meals may be involved).

Model 3: Learning and support programs. To support advanced academic writers, including thesis, dissertation, and faculty writers (many of whom experience unrivaled demands on their time and who are often quite emotionally and physically isolated), campus learning and support programs may find that offering a retreat-style intervention program is beneficial. These programs may be housed independently or be based within broader WAC/WID or writing center programs. A retreat-style program offers participants intensive experience with the grounding benefits of the longer intervention programs but over the course of a single day or a few days rather than a few weeks, a semester, or an academic year. It should be noted, however, that a retreat-style program largely sacrifices the more sustained and sustaining practices supporting self-efficacy, self-compassion, and the management of writing anxiety; for these reasons, a retreat-style intervention program is not recommended for advanced academic writers who are struggling with their awarenesses and writing productivity, but rather is recommended to support those writers who feel more confident in their self-efficacy and writing productivity and who may simply need a contemplative venue in which to write or ground their already-mostly effective management of their writing anxiety. To effectively support advanced academic writer

participants, it is recommended that facilitators of retreat-style intervention programs adapt and condense the lesson plans from the present study.¹⁷ This limited-yet-intensive program could be fitted into a weekend during the semester or a week during a longer break and could maximize the amount of time spent in mindful writing intervals; in such a program, intervals of mindful writing could span 4-6 hours in a single day. If such is the case, however, it is suggested that time spent in writing intervals be bracketed and supported by other grounding and contemplative practices.

Conclusion

The present study is the first of its kind in Composition to systematically consider the impacts of mindfulness practices on the self-efficacy, management of writing anxiety, and writing productivity of advanced academic writers engaged in high stakes writing; as such, this study (1) increases what we in Composition now know and understand about both the writing practices dissertation writers, (2) identifies areas and populations that deserve further scholarly attention, (3) makes specific and wide-reaching evidence-based programmatic and field recommendations concerning the support of advanced academic writers, and (4) forwards a portable program of mindfulness intervention that can be adapted from multiple sites to support academic writers across a number of contexts.

Future Composition studies that employ different methods than the ones used here will certainly lead to different (and differently nuanced) findings and will shed new and needed light on the practices of mindful Composition researchers, the needs of academic writer participants, and the role of mindfulness intervention in the field of Composition as it continues to evolve. As is suggested elsewhere in this text, this research project could just as easily have examined how best to support the writing practices of undergraduate, faculty, elementary, elderly, at-risk, or

incarcerated writers through mindfulness practices, to name but a few possibilities. Given my own specialties and interests as a researcher and facilitator, the present course was the most logical and represented the best fit; however, these other directions are, as yet, unexplored and constitute exciting and important avenues of future Composition research.

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Appendix A

Notes

1. The difference in terminology in describing advanced academic writers for whom English is not their primary or most facile language (“multilingual,” “L2,” or “non-native English speaker”) comes directly from Cotterall (2011) and Li (2007), respectively, and did not stem from any intention herein to identify either term as more correct or accurate. It was not the intention of the present research to make any statement on this highly contested issue.
2. As with Note 1, the intention here was to identify a quality implicit in Li’s (2007) scholarship; both Li and her research participant clearly position the English language as a valued medium for academic scholarship. It was not the intention of this research project to either support or interrogate that valuation; rather the intention was simply to report on it in the larger scheme of Li’s mentorship of her research participant.
3. While the joint CWPA-NCTE-NWP (2011) statement is specifically concerned with supporting undergraduate writers, this research project sought to adapt and extend this commitment on behalf of doctoral student writers (as the statement does, indeed, seem appropriate for writers of all levels).
4. Though interesting for what it reveals about changes in participants’ awarenesses between the post-intervention and follow-up tests (as well as for what it indicates about the need for a more sustained mindfulness intervention program), a presentation of the full set of post-intervention to follow-up quantitative data is not appropriate in the present context; it is neither relevant to the present discussion, nor to the ability of the quantitative results to address the research questions. In short, a comparison of participants’ mean responses to the Self-Report Questionnaire items from the post-intervention to follow-up stages reveals

results that are largely ambivalent, with a decided combination of increases and decreases in participants' mean scores.

Among the meta-categories, the notable increases occur largely in the *Dissertation writing productivity* and *Management of writing anxiety* sections, while the notable decreases occur in the *Mindfulness component* and *Current levels of self-efficacy* sections. Increases in the follow-up test appear most frequently in items where participants' mean scores in the post-intervention test indicate median awarenesses (at or below 3), whereas decreases at the follow-up test appear most frequently in items where participants' mean scores in the post-intervention test indicate higher awarenesses (above 3). Further, in all but two items (items 1 and 18), items where participants' mean scores in the post-intervention test are at or exceed 3.5 correspond with the sharpest decreases in participants' mean responses in the follow-up test.

5. As is indicated in Appendix B and operationalized in the text of Chapter 4, a number of items that comprise the Self-Report Questionnaire are “reverse-scored items.” The reverse-scored items denote instances where participants' individual and mean responses were expected to decrease over time and where such decreases would indicate that the intervention had been successful in positively impacting participants' experiences. Particularly in the *writing anxiety* meta-category, the presence of reverse-scored items changes the nature of the results from participants' *experiences of writing anxiety* to participants' *management of writing anxiety*. It should be noted, however, that reverse-scored items are present throughout the first four sections of the Self-Report Questionnaire; *Figure 6* presents the full list of items that were reverse-scored:

Self-efficacy

3. I often tell myself that I should be a “better” or “more effective” writer.
4. When I am writing, my mind often wanders off and I have difficulty returning to the writing.

Management of writing anxiety

6. When asked how my writing is going, I often “freeze up” and reply with a stock answer (i.e., “It’s going well” or “It’s fine”).
4. I often put off writing until just before a deadline.

Self-compassion

9. Often when I am stuck or am not progressing quickly in my writing, I berate myself.
10. I often tell myself I shouldn’t be feeling the way I’m feeling.
12. I often compare or judge my progress by the perceived progress of others/those around me.

Mindfulness

13. I find myself doing things without paying attention.
1. It seems I am “running on automatic” without much awareness of what I’m doing.

Figure 6. List of reverse-scored items on self-report questionnaire, organized by meta category and self-report questionnaire item.

6. As is noted in both Appendix B and *Figure 3*, the meta-categories are as follows: Questions 1-4 are self-efficacy questions, questions 5-8 address participants’ management of their writing anxiety, questions 9-12 reveal participants’ current practices of self-compassion, questions 13-16 ask participants to reflect on their level of mindfulness, and questions 17-24 address participants’ dissertation writing productivity.

7. As is discussed later in Chapter 4, significance tests were conducted for all single-comparison tests (pre- to post-, pre- to follow-up, post- to follow-up); however, given the limitations of calculating the statistical significance of three tests with inconsistent participant groups (different *ns*), significance tests were not conducted for the pre to post to follow-up comparison that is illustrated in *Figure 3*.
8. March and April are recognizable as a busy time of year for members of English Departments generally and, due to external time constraints, this intervention program fell toward the end of this period; the first session followed the *Conference on College Composition and Communication*, *American Association for Applied Linguistics*, and *College English Association* national conferences by, at most, a mere two weeks. Most of the participants in this study belong (and were expected to belong) to one of the three fields represented by these conferences and were likely to attend them, and so allowances concerning the scheduling of pre-intervention interviews had to be made.
9. The definition of the term “mindfulness” here indicates a use of this phrase that is consistent with the definitions offered earlier in this text by Hanh and Kabat-Zinn (whereby it is a practice that is concerned with present-centered, non-judgmental awareness of the physical and mental/emotional self and the contexts surrounding the self). However, as is discussed in the subsequent discussion (“Mindfulness under another name”), some of the participants who did not verbally identify as having had prior experience with explicitly Zen Buddhist-conceptions of mindfulness did nonetheless have experience with the forms of body-mind awareness encouraged by martial arts, religious practice, and rigorous athletic training, and which, in my estimation and based on my experiences of mindfulness trainings, should certainly be thought of as important and meaningful forms of lay mindfulness.

10. The story of Clark's ultimate participation as an interview participant is a simple one: By the end of the second intervention program session, it became clear to me that by virtue of the prior experiences of the interview participants (whom I had, by then, already spoken with for the pre-intervention interviews), the interview data would be expressive of certain dominant perspectives regarding language confidence, educational and program experience, and writing process. While I understood that these occurrences in data are a natural result of taking volunteers for interviews (rather than random selection of interview participants), I nonetheless felt that there were deeply interesting and affecting stories in the room that may not be visible in the data unless I acted precipitously. With the consent of my advisor, I pursued an addendum to my IRB application; official permission to conduct a standalone interview with participants on the basis of their unique perspectives was granted in the third week of the intervention program and I invited Clark to do an interview. He consented immediately and his contributions form an interesting and informative part of the data that are analyzed and discussed in this Chapter, as well as considerably impacting the implications and recommendations forwarded in Chapter 6.
11. Though under other circumstances discussions of such a wide range of topics could be termed "digressions," I believe that in the contexts of this dissertation project – a *Composition* study of an intervention's impacts on participants' *writing practices* (where we might understand seemingly non-writing related activities as part of the all-important incubation process (Flower and Hayes, 1981)) – this range is highly valuable and these participants are to be thanked for the generosity of spirit that moved them to share so fully with me in the interviews.

12. While the notes in my field journal are clear concerning the identity of this participant – and though I have already assigned them a pseudonym elsewhere in this document – I have assigned them the additional pseudonym of “X” here in order to protect their identity with an extra layer of anonymity.
13. Because the intervention program was designed for an audience of non-meditation-specializing and non-Buddhist participants, the terms “meditation,” “breathing,” and “mindful breathing” were used interchangeably throughout the workshop sessions. (Though, in an effort to ascertain exact meanings and experiences, I took care to use specific language when speaking directly with participants in interviews.) I believe this linguistic flexibility falls within Williams and Kabat-Zinn’s (2011) intention of adapting and “recontextualizing” (p. 3) the traditionally Buddhist practices of meditation and awareness for a western audience and context; like Williams and Kabat-Zinn (2011), my hope was to make these practices accessible for individuals who may not “seek (them) out within a Buddhist context” (p. 5).
14. For though this last interview question was meant as an opportunity to check in with participants on a meta-interview level, to ensure that they had had the time and space to speak, the wording of this question is obviously ambiguous and thus invites all manner of appropriate questions from participants who are themselves interested and engaged individuals.
15. This description is based, with thanks, on the language that Dr. Bryna Siegel Finer uses in her Composition courses to refer her students to the Writing Center, after which she rewards them with extra credit and some measure of forbearance in her assessment of their writing.
16. While this may be a difficult practice for facilitators, it is a vital one; for while it is a common social convention to respond to negative self-talk or deficit-thinking with language

that attempts to dismantle those expressions (i.e., “No, you *are* able and smart and you *can* do this!”) – and while these attempts are well-intentioned – these attempts often also appear to invalidate speakers’ own experiences. The key here is for facilitators to practice non-response or neutral response, whereby the facilitator may engage with the comment “I often feel I need to change how I write to conform to a standard and that my writing isn’t good enough” by accepting it into the conversation with “Okay” or “Thank you for sharing that with us.” Engaging with negative self-talk or deficit-thinking in these ways makes room for participants to safely feel their self-doubt – which they have likely already felt judged for expressing (“Don’t think like that!”) – and supports them as they engage in mindfulness practices and move through to more self-accepting thoughts.

17. Borrowing from the intervention design implemented in the present study (Chapter 3), the following table outlines the agenda for a two-day retreat-style program of mindfulness intervention:

<u>Day 1</u>	
8:00-9:00 am:	Registration and breakfast
9:00-10:00 am:	Introductions First impressions Mindfulness talk (gentle and present awareness)
10:00-10:30 am:	Gentle yoga and mindful breathing
10:30 am – 12:30 pm:	Mindful writing (intervals of 20-30 minutes)
12:30-1:30 pm:	Lunch
1:30-2:15 pm:	Reflections on morning session Mindfulness talk (non-attachment from views)
2:15-2:30 pm:	Gentle yoga and mindful breathing
2:30-4:30 pm:	Mindful writing (intervals of 20-30 minutes)
4:30-5:00 pm:	Reflections; questions
<u>Day 2</u>	
8:00-9:00 am:	Breakfast
9:00-9:45 am:	Mindfulness talk (lovingkindness) Gentle yoga and mindful breathing
9:45 am – 12:30 pm:	Mindful writing (intervals of 20-30 minutes)
12:30-1:30 pm:	Lunch
1:30-2:15 pm:	Reflections on morning session Gentle yoga and mindful breathing
2:15-4:30 pm:	Mindful writing (intervals of 20-30 minutes)
4:30-5:00 pm:	Reflections; questions

Figure 7. Agenda for a two-day retreat-style program of mindfulness intervention.

Appendix B

Self-Report Questionnaire

Current levels of self-efficacy

1. I can easily focus on the writing task at hand.
2. When I feel stuck with my writing, I am able to easily navigate around the blockage.
3. I often tell myself I should be a “better” or “more effective” writer. (R)
4. When I am writing, my mind often wanders off and I have difficulty returning to the writing. (R)

Current levels of writing anxiety

5. I feel calm when interacting with my dissertation advisor.
6. When asked how my writing is going, I often “freeze up” and reply with a stock answer (i.e., “It’s going well” or “It’s fine”). (R)
7. I often put off writing until just before a deadline. (R)
8. I can easily let go of anxious or nervous feelings concerning my writing.

Current practice of self-compassion

9. Often when I am stuck or am not progressing quickly in my writing, I berate myself. (R)
10. I often tell myself I shouldn’t be feeling the way I’m feeling. (R)
11. I am often able to celebrate small milestones, even knowing that there is more work to be done.
12. I often compare or judge my progress by the perceived progress of others/those around me. (R)

Mindfulness component

13. I find myself doing things without paying attention. (R)
14. I am able to focus on the present moment (what I am seeing, doing, tasting, feeling, hearing, or smelling).
15. I am able to accept the thoughts and feelings that I have.
16. It seems I am “running on automatic” without much awareness of what I’m doing. (R)

Dissertation writing practices

17. I am satisfied with my progress with the revision of my document.
18. My ideas are clearly articulated in my writing.
19. I am currently satisfied with my writing productivity.
20. Rate of writing production (pages per week).
21. Number of pages written.
22. Expected number of pages written (expectation of current draft).
23. Hours spent writing consistently.
24. Expected number of drafts until the submittable/final draft.

Notes:

Items 1-20 are to be rated on the following scale:

Strongly agree	Sometimes agree	Unsure	Sometimes disagree	Strongly Disagree
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Items 21-22 are to be rated on the following scale:

1-5	5-10	10-15	+15	Not applicable
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Item 23 is to be rated on the following scale:

0	1-3	4-6	+6	Not applicable
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Item 24 is to be rated on the following scale:

0	1-2	3-5	+5	Not applicable
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(R) = Reverse-scored items

Appendix C

Pre-Intervention Interview Questions

1. Describe your interest in this program. (Revision: Describe your interest in this workshop series.)
2. Describe any experience you may have with writing or non-writing mindfulness practices. (Revision: Moved from original question 4 to question 2.)
3. Where are you in your doctoral program?
 - a. Describe your progress with your dissertation.
4. Describe yourself as a writer.
 - a. Do you ever get “stuck” with your writing and, if so, how do you manage it?

Appendix D

Post-Intervention Interview Questions

1. Describe your experience of the mindfulness program.
2. What was it like to be in the room and go through the workshop with people who had such a variety of responses to and experiences with the workshop and practices? (Revision: Question inserted)
3. Describe your progress with your dissertation.
4. Describe yourself as a writer.

Appendix E

Follow-Up Interview Questions

1. Describe your progress with your dissertation.
2. Describe yourself as a writer.
3. Describe, if any, the ways you have incorporated writing-related mindfulness practices into your regular practices?
4. What do you want to know/what do you expect of someone running a mindful writing workshop? (Revision: Question inserted)

Appendix F

Stand-Alone Interview Questions

1. Describe your interest in the program.
2. Describe any prior experience you had with writing or non-writing mindfulness practices.
3. Describe your experience of the mindfulness program.
4. Where are you in your doctoral program
 - a. Describe your progress with your dissertation.
5. Describe yourself as a writer.
 - a. Do you ever get “stuck” in your writing and, if so, how do you manage it?
6. Describe, if any, the ways you have incorporated writing-related mindfulness practices into your regular practices.

Appendix G

Workshop Lesson Plans

Workshop Session 1

- Before workshop, as people come in: Distribute consent forms/questionnaire and give them a moment to complete these documents before we get started

- 1:00-1:15 pm: Introductions
- 1:15-1:27 pm: First impressions
 - Idea mapping – What do you think/see when you think of academic writing, specifically your dissertation project?
 - To be collected at the end of session and returned to them at the end of final session for comparison
- 1:25-2:25 pm: Mindfulness talk
 - Introduction to mindfulness and the writing process (why they are where and the immediate and larger goals of the workshop)
 - Today's theme: Gentle and present awareness → That is, actively inhabiting and experiencing the present moment → today, we'll get at this through the body
 - Activity: Mindful eating
 - Feel → sound → look → smell → taste
- 1:40-1:50 pm: Gentle yoga and mindful breathing
 - Mountain pose, upward salute, side bend, eagle arms (x2), heart opener, forward fold, rag doll
 - Mindful breathing: What do you need today? What no longer serves you? → In breath, out breath → Inhale and breathe in what you need, exhale and let go
- 1:50-2:20 pm: Mindful writing intervals
 - Before beginning the intervals, check in with body: Notice the body before, during, and after the act of writing, paying particular attention to tension in the body
 - Instruction: Simply write (or revise or research or make notes) for 10 minutes
 - At the end of each 10 minute period, the bell will sound and you will be invited to take a brief pause to check in with your body and make any necessary adjustments
 - Following second 10 minute session: slightly longer break for heart opening seated twist
- 2:20-2:30 pm: Reflection on practices; questions

Workshop Session 2

- Before workshop: Welcome and check-in with participants

- 1:00-1:15 pm: Mindfulness Talk – Nonattachment from views, or “control and surrender”
 - Freewriting:
 1. List your fears about your dissertation project.
 2. What does freedom from those fears look like *right now*? (I.e., What do you need right now?)
 - Talking (put things on board?)
- 1:15-1:25 pm: Gentle yoga and mindful breathing
 - Mountain pose, upward salute, side bend, eagle arms (x2), heart opener, forward fold, rag doll
 - Mindful breathing: What do you need today? What no longer serves you? → In breath, out breath → Inhale and breathe in what you need, exhale and let go
- 1:25-2:25 pm: Mindful writing intervals
 - Before beginning the intervals, check in with body: Notice the body before, during, and after the act of writing, paying particular attention to tension in the body
 - Instruction: Simply write (or revise or research or make notes) for 10 minutes
 - At the end of each 10 minute period, the bell will sound and you will be invited to take a brief pause to check in with your body and make any necessary adjustments
 - Following third 10 minute session: slightly longer break for heart opening seated twist
- 2:25-2:30 pm: Reflection on practices; questions

Workshop Session 3

- Before workshop: Welcome and check-in with participants
- Goal of today: To sit quietly with our selves; to see without judging

- 1:00-1:15 pm: Mindfulness Talk – Lovingkindness (also called “compassionate listening and loving speech”)
 - Freewriting:
 - List 15 things that you love about yourself. (Caveat: A minimum of three must be related to you as a dissertation writer and doctoral candidate.)
 - Talking: There are a lot of ways to do this...during conflict – listen in turns; during turmoil with self – what does instinct say?
- 1:15-1:25 pm: Heart opening yoga and meditation (Jan’s lovingkindness meditation)
 - Mountain pose, upward salute, side bend, eagle arms (x2), heart opener, forward fold, rag doll
 - Meditation: Jan’s lovingkindness meditation → begin with largest population and funnel down to self
- 1:25-2:25 pm: Mindful writing intervals
 - Before beginning the intervals, check in with body: Notice the body before, during, and after the act of writing, paying particular attention to tension in the body
 - Instruction: Simply write (or revise or research or make notes) for 10 minutes
 - At the end of each 10 minute period, the bell will sound and you will be invited to take a brief pause to check in with your body and make any necessary adjustments
 - Following third 10 minute session: slightly longer break for heart opening seated twist
- 2:25-2:30 pm: Reflection on practices; questions

Workshop Session 4

- Before workshop: Welcome and check-in with participants
- Goal of today: To explore practices and habits of mind that support and sustain writing
- Hand out post-questionnaires, to be completed before they leave

- 1:00-1:10 pm: Mindfulness Talk – Sustainable writing practices
 - Freewriting: Define for yourself: Boundaries; non-judgment; To be a self-sustaining writer (“yes” and “no”)
- 1:10-1:20 pm: Yoga and meditation
 - Mountain pose, upward salute, side bend, eagle arms (x2), heart opener, forward fold, rag doll
 - Meditation: What do you need today? What no longer serves you?
- 1:20-2:10 pm: Mindful writing intervals
 - Before beginning the intervals, check in with body: Notice the body before, during, and after the act of writing, paying particular attention to tension in the body
 - Instruction: Simply write (or revise or research or make notes) for 10 minutes
 - At the end of each 10 minute period, the bell will sound and you will be invited to take a brief pause to check in with your body and make any necessary adjustments
 - Following third 10 minute session: slightly longer break for heart opening seated twist
- 2:10-2:30 pm: Reflection on practices; questions.
 - Freewriting: What do you think of when you think of academic writing, specifically your dissertation project?
 - Return drawings from first day; compare for self
 - Share comparisons

Appendix H

Workshop Handouts

Mindful Writing Workshop: Session 1

Tuesday, April 4, 2017

Nadia Francine Zamin
ABD, Composition and TESOL
HSS 504
n.zamin@iup.edu
330-990-2583



This workshop series offers participants experience with body- and awareness-based mindfulness practices that can support writing practices across writing contexts.

Goals of the session:

- Experience gentle and present awareness through mindful eating
- Direct experience with mindfulness practices (yoga, breathing, mindful writing) that support writers' self-efficacy, reduce writing-anxiety, and optimize writing productivity
- Share observations, reflections, and questions about awareness

Agenda:

- 1:00-1:15 pm: Introductions
- 1:15-1:27 pm: First impressions: Idea mapping
- 1:27-1:40 pm: Mindfulness talk: Gentle and present awareness
- 1:40-1:50 pm: Gentle yoga and mindful breathing
- 1:50-2:20 pm: Mindful writing intervals
- 2:20-2:30 pm: Reflection on practices; questions

Take home practices:

- Gentle and present awareness: Notice the body before, during, and after the act of writing, paying particular attention to any tension in the body

Tuesday, April 11, 2017

Goals of the session:

- ## Agenda:

- ## Take home practices:

- Notice reactions and strong feelings; name them; *choose* subsequent behavior

Tuesday, April 18, 2017

Goals of the session:

- ## Agenda:

- ## Take home practices:

- Notice un-compassionate and self-critical thoughts; name them; let go of them on out-breath

Tuesday, April 25, 2017

Doctoral Candidate, Composition and TESOL

n.zamin@iup.edu

[illegible]

Goals of the session:

- ## Agenda:

- ### Useful resources:

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