The Actor and the Iceberg

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THE ACTOR AND THE ICEBERG

by

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B.S. Radford University, 2013

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ABSTRACT

Actors have ingrained vocal, physical, and mental habits they unknowingly use on stage in the form of physical movements, vocalization, and character choices which can inadvertently communicate information to the audience. Rarely, however, are actors asked to play themselves and if their own habits are unconsciously being merged with their intentional character choices, then the audience’s perception of the actor’s portrayal may be shaped by unintentional behavior. “The Actor and the Iceberg” will be a synthesis of awareness building and control techniques for the mind and body, specifically: meditation, mindfulness, the Feldenkrais Method, and the Alexander Technique. The goal of combining these techniques is that they will enable the actor to gain awareness and control of their habits, thus providing them the ability to create a character with inherently genuine choices unblemished by actor tendencies. These ideas will be incorporated through the portrayals of Don Pedro and Wilmore in The Rover. The success of the process will be measured by a biweekly self-examination of habit recognition and control coinciding with a biweekly examination via movement professor and stage combat instructor.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In loving memory of Mark Brotherton.

Thank you to my loving parents, encouraging advisors, and the 2021 MFA Cohort.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Me, Myself, and the Iceberg” – David Eagleman

Human beings like to believe that they are masters of their consciousness, in complete command of their processes. This belief is of course untrue. There is a great deal of physical and psychological action that takes place without conscious thought. The average human being blinks between 15-20 times a minute according to the Smithsonian Institution, however, unless attention is drawn to the act of blinking it typically happens unconsciously. Similarly, Sigmund Freud discovered while working with patients suffering from psychological disorders, there did not seem to be anything in their conscious minds driving their behavior. This led him to believe that unbeknownst to humans, there were underlying causes of behavior within the subconscious. Which led him to believe that “the mind was not simply equal to the conscious part we familiarly live with; rather it was like an iceberg, the majority of its mass hidden from sight.” (Eagleman 17)

This raises the question of – exactly how much other unconscious behavior does the human body execute that is not registered by the conscious mind? While this is a fascinating concept for the layman to explore, for the actor it is a question that carries an increased significance. Unconscious behavior within the actor could limit their ability to successfully craft individualized characters and thus their versatility. The goal of this work is to assist actors in identifying their unconscious habitual behavior, modify that behavior if necessary, and retain the modification of that behavior. By accomplishing this, an actor should see a notable increase in versatility.
Within this document, versatility in acting will be categorized as the ability to create multiple unique characters devoid of unconscious vocal and physical habits. To accomplish this goal it is important to understand the origins of the habit. Habits are unconscious behavior that have been adopted by the performer in their life/career and have the capability to negatively impact their art. Voice practitioner Patsy Rodenberg (1964) explains:

The child who is continually mocked or teased by an overbearing parent; the partner whose sentences are always completed by the other…the academic or executive who lords it over the less well-educated or less skilled underling… The memory of an insidious comment, as vivid as any physical violation, can lodge somewhere within us and become entrenched in our bodies, our breath and our own voices. It becomes an echo in our communication…possibly forever. (Rodenberg 93-94)

As Ms. Rodenberg explains, these lived experiences can result in habitual behaviors ranging from: posture issues, accents, biting fingernails, vocalized pauses (saying “um” in the middle of sentences), and an almost endless number of additional behaviors – unbeknownst to the person. If these actions are not perceived, they can show up in all elements of life – including performance. Therefore, to create a character fully utilizing all the tools at their disposal, the actor needs to develop an awareness of their body that allows them to change their habits.

Habits are unconscious limits to the versatility of an actor’s choices. Reason being that actor’s with movement and vocal habits create characters that share those same habits, regardless of the character work they have done. This study will focus on improving the ability to identify and manipulate habits, manifesting itself in a study of the mind and body. The methodologies selected have been proven effective in building awareness, changing cyclical behaviors, and
increasing the mind/body connection. By developing these skills, the actor should become more versatile.

Successfully identifying habitual unconscious behavior is paramount to habit manipulation. Therefore, enhancing the mind’s ability to recognize habitual behavior will be the foundation of this work, with Dr. Ellen J. Langer’s work serving as the focal point. Dr. Langer’s Mindfulness theory will be utilized to build toward an increased awareness with fewer actions performed unconsciously. In her book *Mindfulness*, Dr. Langer details the process of keeping the mind focused on the present moment, or what she titles “Active Awareness,” and how it can positively affect the mind/body. In the text, she also introduces the dual concepts of mindlessness (non-active awareness) and mindfulness (active awareness). Mindlessness has three basic components summarized below:

**Trapped by Categories** – This term refers to allowing past experiences to influence current beliefs without taking context into account. This mindless behavior is what leads to stereotyping/overlooking information because it does not fit into a preconceived narrative. ‘Trapped in Categories’ can have negative affect on the versatility of the actor as well, by encouraging the creation of one-dimensional stereotypes in character creation. This mindless behavior can also lead to an actor becoming a caricature of a character.

**Automatic Behavior** – The act of habitually repeating habitual unconscious action that requires no active attention. This mindless behavior is seen in habitual acts such as the biting of fingernails or the tilting of the head when speaking. As an actor this limits versatility because, if not manipulated, this action will be present in each of their characters.

**Acting from a Single Perspective** – The act of taking an inflexible point of view that limits creativity. This creates issues for an actor by limiting their ability to empathize with characters during the process of creating a character. This can also encourage actors to believe there is a ‘correct way’ for to perform, thus limiting their versatility by reinforcing habitual choices.

According to Dr. Langer, the presence of these behaviors, either individually or collectively, create a state of being which she titles Mindlessness, or a cyclical pattern of actions done without
active consideration. The physical manifestation of Mindlessness may appear as habits which are performed repetitiously and unconsciously. Langer further offers that Mindlessness may be minimized or reversed through a process that she entitles: Mindfulness. She details the process of Mindfulness which consists of five practices that when utilized will lead to an improved active awareness by neutralizing mindless behavior. By making a conscious commitment to utilize these five practices the actor should be able to recognize and manipulate mindless habits. These following five components will be used throughout the thesis in order develop methods to actively engage the actor’s mindless habits.

**Creating New Categories** – The act of examining new stimuli without allowing past experiences to influence the examination. Utilizing this practice trains a rejection of stereotypes, focused committed attention to the immediate surroundings, and an understanding that new information could change a previous understanding. Mindfulness in this sense encourages the actor’s versatility by encouraging exploration of characters and movements outside of the habitual.

**Welcoming New Information** – The act of embracing a mindset that examines new stimuli without allowing future expectations to influence the examination. Utilizing this practice trains the mind to follow more process-oriented thinking by disregarding expected outcomes in favor the current exploration. Embracing this process-oriented mindset will benefit the movement explorations within this work, as they follow similar ideologies.

**More Than One View** – The act of understanding that there is an almost limitless number of ways to interpret information. In layman’s terms, understanding that a family pet can be interpreted as a pet, a nuisance, a protector, etc. This tenet of Mindfulness is vital for breaking up old thought patterns and can enable an actor to increase their versatility.

**Control over Context** – The act of using the mind to influence the body’s experience. Dr. Langer had success testing this theory with hospital patients. “Patients who were about to undergo major surgery were taught to imagine themselves in one of two situations: playing football or preparing for a dinner party…Those patients who were taught to reinterpret the hospital experience in nonthreatening ways took fewer pain killers and sedatives and tended to leave the hospital sooner than the untrained patients” (Langer 74-75). By the act of changing the context of their experience the patients recovered faster than the patients who did not change their context. This is useful for the
actor attempting to neutralize their habits by allowing their habitual behaviors to be recategorized into an optional choice as opposed to mandatory behavior, encouraging the growth habit malleability.

**Process Before Outcome** – The commitment to keeping an active awareness throughout an action without any assumptions. Utilizing this practice should greatly assist the movement methodologies as they both believe in developing increased understanding of how the body moves/interacts with itself. Rooted in breaking down movements into smaller components to discover where tension or unnecessary tension is used.

Dr. Langer postulates that the application of mindful behavior results in a gradual increase in awareness of habits and decrease in the existence of habits will follow. This project will incorporate these tenets into daily life with the hopes that the result will be an increase in habit identification/reduction by encouraging a gradual evolution of mindset into mindfulness, freeing the actor of mindless/habitual behavior and instill within them the awareness necessary to develop more mindful movement options. However, to successfully implement this mindset, time must be allotted as mindfulness takes time to cultivate. Dr. Lidia Zylowska, who uses Mindfulness to treat ADHD, suggests that incorporating meditation into Mindfulness training can be beneficial by changing the mind. “Harvard University showed that long-term meditators had thicker (or more developed) brain regions related to attention, self-monitoring, and emotional processing when compared to an average person” (Zylowska 41). Meditation has been shown to possess unique benefits for increased mindfulness – demonstrating physical changes to the brain to accompany the new mindsets being put in place by Mindfulness. Dr. Langer herself states that she believes “Meditation is… a tool. It’s way to lead to post-meditation mindfulness” (Hogg), thus both Mindfulness Meditation (MM) and Concentrative Meditation (CM) will also be implemented for the mind.
Mindfulness Meditation (MM) is a practice that shares some similarities with the mindful behavior of Langer. “MM technique involves an adoption of a particular attentional stance toward all objects… When an individual notices that their mind wanders off or becomes focused on a particular object, emotion, or thought during meditation, their attention should be redirected to the body and environment” (Muller 278). MM encourages the practitioner to keep an open awareness, taking in as much information as possible as opposed to focusing on a single thought or object. For an actor, being able to embrace an awareness which treats the environment/body as equally important is necessary to avoid mindlessly falling into habits. MM can also be beneficial for the mind as it “may help activate defocused attentional states, which have been linked to creativity…Defocused attention leads to perceiving more characteristics of a stimulus, and thus results in a larger number of associations and greater potential to access and connect remote concepts” (Muller 279). Through the practice of MM, the brain is trained to interpret all stimuli as equally important allowing it to process more detail on all information that it is receiving. Thus, MM practice can assist in mitigating a practitioner’s engrained movement habits by enhancing the perception of an actor performing an action i.e., trying to move their arm. With MM practice, the actor should see an increased ability to deconstruct the movement into smaller movements – discovering more options in the movement and aiding in the identification of personal habits.

While MM encourages creating an open awareness to enhance perception, Concentrative Meditation (CM) asks that the practitioner to utilize a concentrated awareness focused on one task or object. There is evidence that implementing CM will lead to increased stimuli recognition and boost an actor’s ability to change usual cognitive patterns. The Behavioural [sic] Science
Institute, of Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands hosted a focus group that was examining the effect of meditation practices on creativity and discovered that attendees who practiced CM demonstrated an “increase in cognitive flexibility observed… cognitive flexibility is the ability to change usual cognitive patterns, overcome cognitive fixedness, and thus to make novel (i.e., creative) associations between concepts… increased cognitive flexibility might lead to an overall increase in a participants creativity” (Muller 283). The Behavioural Science Institute’s study shows training the brain with CM has been proven to increase its ability to produce and change according to new information, otherwise known as Neuroplasticity.

Neuroplasticity is the ability of the brain to learn/change. As previously noted, Meditation practice has been found to physically change the brain – which increases its neuroplasticity. Dr. Zylowska cites a study by Dr. Tang, who teaches cognitive Neuroscience at Dalian University in China as well as with the University of Oregon, which details exactly how this process works. Tang’s work *The Neuroscience of Mindfulness Meditation* provides the chart in Fig 1 to explain the process.

![Image: Mindfulness Meditation’s Promotion of Behavior Change](image-url)
By strengthening physical areas of the brain, meditation practice leads to growth in the areas of Attention Control, Emotion Regulation and Self-Awareness which induces more successful behavior change. Therefore, by using meditation in conjunction with mindfulness strategies, the actor will benefit from not only increased awareness but an increased ability to self-regulate habitual behavior leading to a retention of habit reduction. When practiced in repetition these techniques will successfully prime the mind to receive and adapt to the information gained via the somatic movement practices with more ease.

Somatic movement styles are exploratory movement exercises that attempt to strengthen the body/mind connection, by focusing on the intricate internal components of a movement. Somatic techniques assist in the removal of habitual physical tendencies through an increased physical corporeal understanding. While many differing Somatic movement methodologies exist, this thesis will specifically focus upon the Alexander Technique and the Feldenkrais Method due to their common use in actor training programs, shared process-based mindsets, and similarities in methodologies.

Since its inception in the 1970’s, the Alexander Technique has become a foundational approach used by voice professionals and theatre practitioners as a method of freeing the body from unnecessary tension. F.M. Alexander, the technique’s founder, was a performer who began to research vocal health as a result of habitual injury to his own throat when acting. Alexander took it upon himself to set up mirrors so that he could identify the exact moment in speech where he habitually moved his head forward and inadvertently damaged his throat. Alexander found that unconscious habits were causing damage to his body and impeding his ability to use his voice, attempting to fix these unconscious habits produced his technique. The premise being that
after identifying what the habit is and where it begins in the Body, the Mind can be used to redirect the body to a more beneficial movement. This became the foundations of what is now known as The Alexander Technique. The Technique, as it is now practiced, contains the seven principles listed below:

1) Recognition of habit present in an activity or movement,

2) Inhibition - the idea of stopping or pausing to undo the unwanted habitual response to an activity,

3) The ‘primary control’ - The ‘primary control’ is observable in all animal movement. When a dog, horse, cat or lizard moves its head, it moves from the top of the spine in a forward and upward direction, which engages the spine to lengthen.

4) Giving direction. The notion of using your thinking to redirect your movement in an orderly sequence to mobilize the primary control.

5) Recognition of faulty sensory feedback. Learning that our kinesthetic sense is tied to habit, thereby giving unreliable sensory feedback in the early stage of the learning experience. Our feelings are accustomed to our habits. When we make a change, the nervous system responds with new sensations and we become unsure of our feelings.

6) End-gaining. The concept of the student being too focused on the end of a desired goal and not being ‘in the moment’. In Alexander work, the actor’s attention will be in the moment of the means whereby they achieve their end.
7) Non-doing. Moving with ease. The truthfulness of the adage ‘less is more’.

Observing the quality of movement. (McEvenue 11-12)

Alexander Technique practitioners have found ways to integrate the technique into acting methodology via its ability to guide an actor into a natural, not habitual, stance. This means that the actor’s body has a better grasp of a neutral stance, allowing their intentional character choices to be clear from the habitual tendencies, thereby increasing versatility.

The second Somatic movement methodology that will be utilized in this thesis is the Feldenkrais Method which was created in the 1970’s by Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais. Feldenkrais was afflicted by a persistent knee injury which spurred him into developing a movement methodology, based around “helping the person to improve psychophysical awareness, giving them the opportunity to make a rational choice of movements and actions” (Strelchuk, Ivashchenko 83). Dr. Feldenkrais’ work was founded upon the idea of increasing bodily awareness through movement, leading to unconscious habitual patterns of movement being identified and thus gaining the freedom to consciously change/utilize other movement options. To build this ‘awareness through movement’ Dr. Feldenkrais designed a serious of movement explorations to be completed slowly with a focus on utilizing the least amount of strain for each movement. This is accomplished via participation in physical explorations such as the body roll, which asks the practitioner to lay on their back and roll from side to side using the least muscularity possible. After the action is complete, the practitioner (or Instructor) is then tasked with taking a moment to assess the musculature used to complete the movement and how it could possibly be done with less muscularity. If at any moment muscular or corporeal pain or stress is felt by the practitioner, they are instructed to stop and assess why, and then to take an additional
attempt upon completing their full body analysis. Participation in these activities will gradually increase awareness of habitual movement tendencies, and how those habits create tension and hinder ease movement within the body.

Synthesizing these somatic movement practices with meditation and Mindfulness will provide the actor with an increased understanding of their body’s movement physiology. As this growth of understanding occurs, physical habits that were previously unnoticed should be notated and, as practice continues, be more malleable. Thus, at the end of this process the goal will be to have an actor whose awareness growth, habit control, and retention of habit control has been documented – leading to a more versatile performance. These ideas will be instituted during the rehearsal process of the Theatre UCF performance of Aphra Behn’s restoration comedy *The Rover*.

*The Rover* provides a unique opportunity to test this theory as it contains accent work, heightened speech/performance style, and stage combat. Additionally, during the process a second character with entirely different characteristics was added to the project, increasing the ability to test these ideas. The character originally assigned was Don Pedro, a rich privileged member of society who was trained as a swordsman with a Castilian accent. The second character assigned was Wilmore, the protagonist a British rapscallion who attempts to seduce/charm most women he meets. Adding a character so diametrically opposed to Don Pedro will provide an additional challenge for this test – keeping these two characters being developed at the same time from sharing characteristics. The methodologies utilized within this work should provide a strong foundation to hinder the sharing of characteristics despite simultaneous development.

To successfully create these characters without habitual cross over, these methodologies
will be synthesized into a program that fits into an actor’s work schedule while still allowing for improvement in the ability to discover habitual behaviors, manipulate habitual behaviors, and retain the habit reduction. In the following chapter the specific plan for adoption will be discussed including benefits of implementation of techniques, creation of a weekly schedule, and determining success as it relates to the rehearsal process and performances.
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

“*The delay between thought and action is the basis for awareness.*”

– Moshe Feldenkrais

The exercises found within this section were chosen to assist actors as they pursue increased habit control and versatility. As discussed in the previous chapter, habitual behaviors are linked to both the physical and the psychological, which indicates that a methodology that improves awareness of both the body and the mind will lead to the desired effect. This chapter will chart the process by which this methodology was arranged, the benefits of unifying these practices, and provide an actionable plan to implement these ideas. Successful participation in this methodology should allow the actor to present their characterizations while limiting non-purposeful habitual behavior. Of the many movement/body focused methodologies that were researched during the MFA training track and for the purposes of this thesis, two somatic movement methodologies were selected for this project: the Alexander Technique and the Feldenkrais Method.

The Alexander Technique is utilized in actor training at institutions across the country. In order to become fully trained and certified in this methodology it requires four years of training with a verified accreditation program. Lacking this extensive training necessitated a search for work that distilled key elements of the Alexander Technique into practicable and applicable exercises was necessary. Chris Niess, TheatreUCF’s primary movement instructor (from who’s classes this work primarily derived), provided a copy of *The Actor and the Alexander Technique* by Kelly McEvenue which included: a variety of beneficial exercises to fit into the actor’s daily
practice, testimonials from actor’s who had successfully utilized the technique, and advice for the actor attempting to implement this technique successfully. However, despite the wealth of information in the text, McEvenue encourages acting professionals to work with an instructor who is certified in the Alexander Technique in order to gain the best results. Being limited to the region of Orlando, FL made this difficult as there are very few certified teachers in the surrounding area and getting in contact with them was challenging. Luckily, TheatreUCF Professor Belinda Boyd had a connection with local Rollins College professor Missy Barnes and an in-person meeting was scheduled during the second week of *The Rover* rehearsal process. During the meeting, Professor Barnes conducted an evaluation of noticeable habits in my walk/stance and provided excellent feedback regarding personal habitual tendencies. Additionally, she provided advice regarding beginning Alexander work, unfortunately due to restrictive rehearsal schedules a single meeting was all that could be arranged.

With the blueprint how to incorporate the Alexander Technique decided, the focus turned to the incorporation of the Feldenkrais Method. The Feldenkrais Method is a less common, though still utilized, methodology in North America with regards to actor training. Feldenkrais believed that the body moves in accordance with the subject’s view of themselves (i.e. if the subject does not know how to move without tension, they cannot) and that awareness growth comes from “the delay between thought and actions” (Feldenkrais 45) in his seminal work *Awareness Through Movement*. The Feldenkrais Method espouses the growth of awareness via slow movements utilizing two different types of exercises: Functional Integration (a teacher guides the body) and Awareness Through Movement (instructions are given for self-exploration). Finding a certified Feldenkrais practitioner became imperative because Functional
Integration cannot be practiced without an instructor. Similar to search for a certified Alexander practitioner, being geographically located in Orlando, FL made this difficult as there were very few certified Feldenkrais teachers in the area. However, after emailing numerous Feldenkrais Practitioners located on their website across the state of Florida, a retired Feldenkrais practitioner Barbara Hart agreed to a meeting. Hart provided essential advice and recommendations for text resources. On her suggestion, *Awareness Through Movement* became the guiding text for the project. Additionally, she provided *Feldenkrais At Home* tapes for self-practice of Awareness Through Movement lessons. Additional meetings were scheduled throughout the rehearsal process of *The Rover*.

As research commenced on both of these movement methodologies it became clear that while both utilized awareness (or the mind) in order to assist the body in breaking old habitual behavior, neither of these practices utilize training specifically focused on the mind. Both the Alexander Technique and Feldenkrais Method instead choose to focus on the mind/body connection and the growth that takes place while strengthening that bond. The absence of isolated training specifically for the mind misses an opportunity to increase its value within each practice, especially in lieu of an outside professional’s assistance. By not incorporating training for the mind, individuals are tasked with herculean efforts such as Alexander’s Inhibition (pausing your habitual reactions before they happen) and Feldenkrais’s goal of the expansion of time between thoughts/action without increasing the mind’s ability to do that. To successfully utilize both somatic practices to their fullest potential in regard to habit reduction, additional training that utilizes mind specific methodologies can lead to increased success with habit reduction/control and lead to a more versatile actor.
While both somatic exercises are geared towards increasing the body/mind connection, they do not focus specifically on benefitting the mind. While searching for awareness building practices to add to this methodology, Dr. Bruce Kodish’s *Body Awareness in Theory and Practice.* was discovered. Dr. Kodish states that humans have the ability to voluntarily enter a state of intentional awareness, referencing Dr. Ellen Langer’s Mindfulness theory as an example of this state. Dr. Kodish proposes that utilizing a “Wedge of Awareness” (an image he uses which represents Langer’s Mindfulness) within movement exploration and daily life can assist in reducing habitual behavior:

“Learning how to apply the wedge of awareness (which includes inhibition and direction) in relation to your body mechanics involves developing a conscious control system that you can ‘insert’ into more or less automatic sequences of actions in daily life. You can gradually ‘recalibrate’ your body image towards a better standard of use. This standard becomes a conscious reference level that helps you to direct yourself in activity any time you choose.” (Kodish 363)

The gradual development of a ‘conscious control system’ that could increase the mind’s ability to voluntarily enter into a state of increased awareness, is a vital tool when building towards habit reduction and garnering the most information from the somatic movement methodologies. This also suggests that by developing the ability to use mindfulness, one is, in fact utilizing/training the Alexander steps of Inhibition and Direction (Alexander) in order to gradually recalibrate their body image (Feldenkrais) – which is a goal of both Feldenkrais and Alexander. The Wedge of Awareness theory inspired research into Langer’s mindfulness, with
the goal being that implementation of this technique will lead to reduced habits, as well as benefits to Alexander and Feldenkrais practice.

The Wedge of Awareness was my first introduction to Dr. Langer’s work *Mindfulness*. This work provided excellent detail and guided this study towards a better understanding of the mindfulness methodology. Dr. Langer explains in detail how habitual behavior causes negative effects in everyday life and discusses the benefits of embracing a more ‘active-awareness’/embracing the formation of new ideas (Mindfulness), which melds in seamlessly with the two somatic movement practices that will be explored in this process. Dr. Langer posits that utilizing the brain more efficiently can positively affect the body, with evidence that mindfulness can shorten hospital stays and even recoup lost mental/physical capacity due to aging. While this information provided encouragement that the study of Dr. Langer’s theories of Mindfulness would be beneficial to this project, her text contained a limited amount of exercises to begin the implementation process. Additional mindfulness training methodologies were discovered in Dr. Lidia Zylowska’s book, *Mindfulness Prescription for Adult ADHD*. Dr. Zylowska’s definition of Mindfulness’s key traits “Attention to the present moment…attitude of openness and curiosity” (Zylowska 17) directly mirror Dr. Langer’s. Dr. Zylowska uses mindfulness practice to helpful adults overcome ADHD, providing a plethora of exercises and suggestions on how to beneficially use mindfulness to help increase daily awareness. Her methodology also recommends incorporating meditation techniques into mindfulness practice as it has the ability to positively affect “the function and even the structure of our brains” (Zylowska 41). The meditation practices described in the book were Concentrative (referred to in the quote as Transcendental Meditation or TM) and Mindfulness (open-awareness) meditation.
considering both mutually beneficial “mindfulness practice can train diverse aspects of attention including focused attention and TM practice can increase the ability for mindfulness” (Zylowska 19) suggesting that further research into each would prove fruitful for this experiment.

In the original planning stages of this project, Concentrative Meditation was considered likely for inclusion in this methodology, with hopes that by training the mind to focus on one particular action it would benefit habit recognition and the success of the somatic movement practices. However, further research into CM revealed that it has been shown to assist in developing mindfulness\(^1\) as well as increasing cognitive flexibility\(^2\), which both should prove very essential in the pursuit of habit reduction. Similarly, research into Mindfulness Meditation (MM) showed that it can increase neuroplasticity, or the brains ability to learn/change, by physically changing the brain. As discussed in Chapter 1, MM is shown to strengthen areas of the brain related to Attention Control, Emotion Regulation, and Self-Awareness\(^2\). By incorporating both of these meditation styles and mindfulness techniques into the training regimen there will be recordable data in the following areas: increased ability to enter a state of ‘active awareness’, increase in ability to manipulate habits, and increased growth within the somatic exercises. This should lead to increased habit recognition, reduction, and retention of habit reduction.

Each of these body/mind practices individually would offer practical and substantial support in the pursuit of habit reduction. Additionally, this thesis posits that when combined into a daily practice routine the mind techniques will supplement and increase the benefit of the other mind/body methodologies. This is because the skills/traits that are trained/improved from participating in each of these techniques are utilized within the other body/mind methodologies.
Since these techniques contain exercises that take varying amounts of time, it’s possible to train these skills at numerous moments throughout the day, which in theory means that improvement in habit recognition/reduction should be noticeable at an increased speed. The following section will explain how practice of each mind methodology will lead to enhanced skills that manifest growth that assists aspects of the other techniques.

**Unifying**

Engaging in Mindfulness, Concentrative Meditation, and Mindfulness Meditation techniques in unison with the Alexander Technique and the Feldenkrais Method will lead to habit recognition/reduction in the body with increased success, creating conditions in which the actor is capable of being more versatile actor. This success will be derived not only from the individual methodologies but the interconnected benefits these methodologies will have on each other. The following section will discuss the proposed benefits of the mind techniques selected on the other methodologies, beginning with Mindfulness, and ending with a summation of the benefits in total.

Recurring Mindfulness practice gradually increases the ability to enter a state of ‘Active Awareness.’ To increase that ability Dr. Zylowska’s text provides exercises that take a process-based approach to building awareness utilizing the five senses. This is accomplished by individually allowing each sense to explore stimuli with the goal of not ‘labeling’ any of the information they are receiving. An example of this would be to receive the stimuli of a ‘noise’ without labeling that stimuli as ‘a car horn.’ This is because labels come with preconceived notions/bias that can limit the reception of stimuli, thus hindering an individual’s ability to be
present/mindful of the intricacies of the current stimuli being received. The training of this skill to resist labeling is beneficial because while the Alexander Technique asks participants to follow Step 2 (Inhibition)/Step 6 (End-Gaining) and the Feldenkrais Method asks students to attempt to slow the time between stimuli (thought) and action (labeling), neither trains the mind to do that. It can therefore be reasonably assumed that Mindfulness training would have a beneficial effect on the mind’s growth within the Alexander Technique and Feldenkrais Method. Additionally, this enhanced awareness inspired by Mindfulness training should also assist with recognition of habitual stance/movement, by expanding the mind’s ability to receive information from each of the five senses. By training the mind to redirect its focus on the senses and rejecting the habitual act of labeling the stimuli, the participant will increase their ability to instantaneously enter into a state more active awareness – receiving more information than previously possible.

While utilizing mindfulness techniques will provide benefits to all practices within this methodology, Concentrative Meditation will provide its own unique benefits as well. As previously discussed, there is evidence that consistent CM practice increases a person’s mindfulness. CM techniques may in fact lead to expanding the time between which a stimulus causes a habitual response to occur. “Focused attention meditation mainly involves effort-based concentration with inhibition of nontarget stimuli, it does not directly affect unconscious mind. However, with focused attention practice, concentration could slow down the rise of these mental events and give us time to feel each one arising out of the unconscious even before we see it in consciousness” (Tang 40). To expand the time between stimuli and reaction would increase the probability of habit reduction/retention, and is the exact outcome sought when participating in the Feldenkrais Method.
Concentrative Meditation and mindfulness training offer substantial benefits for the mind, as does the final technique Mindfulness Meditation. MM was included in this project originally due to a belief that by training Mind to register all stimuli as important, habitual behavior would be more recognizable on the conscious level. Further research revealed that not only could MM make habitual behavior more apparent, but the practice of MM could actually help promote behavioral change by training the portions of the brain that control attention, emotion, and self-awareness as noted in Chapter 1. “Research over the past two decades indicate that mindfulness meditation — practiced widely for the reduction of stress and promotion of health — exerts beneficial effects on cognitive performance, physical and mental health, well-being, and brain plasticity” (Tang 49). The increase in cognitive performance, as well as brain plasticity, indicate that the retention of habitual behavior reduction will be more attainable when MM is incorporated into the practice. Increasing the ability to adopt new ideas/behavior is beneficial to each of the other four methodologies being utilized: the Alexander Technique, the Feldenkrais Method, Mindfulness, and Concentrative Meditation.

This endeavor will synthesize the mind techniques into a methodology utilizing the Alexander Technique and Feldenkrais Method to create an actor with less unconscious habitual behavior. Combining these techniques will allow for an increase in brain plasticity, an increase in time between stimuli and reaction, and a unified process to allow the actor to reduce habitual behavior. In order to test the hypothesis, these techniques will be implemented into a weekly schedule designed to garner the most benefit from each practice while still allowing the process mentality of each of these methodologies to remain unchanged. This implementation strategy
was designed to fit within an actor’s schedule, taking into consideration that most actors work multiple jobs leaving them with a set amount of time to dedicate to daily practice.

**Implementation**

The Mindfulness exercises that will be used within this experiment will be from the *Mindfulness Prescription for Adult ADHD* by Dr. Lidia Zylowska. The length of these exercises ranges from a few seconds to 5 minutes a day and will focus on increasing awareness gradually. According to Dr. Zylowska, randomizing the times these exercises take place will help to avoid habitual anticipation to a scheduled event – hopefully inspiring a more constant state of increased awareness. She recommends using a randomizer app to remind the student to perform the actions at random times and ensure more consistent growth. The app will be downloaded to a personal cellular device and programmed to provide an alert twice daily at random intervals as a reminder to perform the exercises.

The initial Mindfulness exercises will be focused on incremental improvements in sensory reception through an activity known as an ‘Attention-Check in.’ An ‘attention-check in’ is the act of bringing your attention to what is happening within the body, as well as in the current location. A randomizer alert will remind the participant twice a day to focus on one of the five senses and to fully explore the stimuli being perceived by that sense. Dr. Zylowska provides prompts on the successful mindful approach such as: “See and touch your pet with full awareness. Smell the soap and feel the water when taking a shower. Hear the sounds of traffic outside your window...” (Zylowska 68). ‘Non-labeling’ while concurrently voluntarily entering a more mindful state should gradually increase a practitioner’s ability to gain information and
provide a greater awareness of their body in space/habitual responses. This ‘attention check in’
will be in place for the entirety of this process, twice a day.

The second Mindfulness exercise will vary based on the day and is designed to gradually
increase the awareness of stimuli from the senses. For the first four weeks of this practice an
instruction to examine current surroundings with a focus on one of the five senses will take
place. The remaining weeks will be devoted to the “STOP Practice.” Dr. Zylowska describes
‘STOP’ as “an all-purpose practice that we can use as a way of turning on a mindful perspective”
(Zylowska 87). The acronym STOP stands for:

S = Stop (or pause)
T = Take a breath and relax
O = Observe in the present moment
  - What sounds do I notice?
  - What is my breath like right now?
  - How does my body feel right now?
P = Proceed
  - Where was my attention before Stop, did it match my intention?
  - Do I continue what I’m doing, or do something else? (Zylowska 86)

The STOP Practice will be performed as soon as possible after the randomizer apps notifies the
participant to do so. This repeated practice will improve the mind’s ability to redirect thoughts
and habit awareness.

Concentrative Meditation will be practiced immediately preceding any somatic practice
with a goal of priming the brain with an increase in neuroplasticity. Mindfulness Meditation will
be practiced prior to each rehearsal in order to encourage recognition of personal physical habits.
CM and MM meditation will be practiced once a day with 15 minutes a session for the first week
and grow intermittently by 5 minutes each week until week four where 30 minute sessions will
continue throughout the remainder of the experiment. Ideally, lifelong practice is helpful, but for
the purpose of the study is intended to find the impact on the creation of a character, with or without a lifetime of practice. Focusing on a gradual increase in time spent meditating will enable a process based mindful mindset to be in place rather than a product-based mindset.

In order to ensure that individual practice is being conducted properly, check-in visits will be scheduled throughout the rehearsal process. Barbara Hart a certified teacher of the Feldenkrais Method will be consulted when possible. If this is not possible, the Feldenkrais lessons will be from Eileen Bach-y-Rita’s *Feldenkrais at Home Tapes* which focus specifically on: Aligning the body (focus on spine, ribcage, and head/neck), the upper body (arms/shoulders, chest, and breathing), and lower body (feet/ankles, legs/pelvis, and hips/abdominals). For the duration of this process Two Feldenkrais lessons a week each totaling one hour. These lessons will take place at 5 pm on weekdays, unless a meeting with the instructor has been scheduled. The Feldenkrais Method is a process-based methodology and will be implemented with the intention of gradually increasing the actor’s ability to find neutrality/habits.

Missy Barnes, a certified instructor of the Alexander Technique, will also be consulted and classes will be taken with this instructor when possible, beginning on November 11th. When it is not possible to meet with the instructor, the varying exercises explored will be taken from *The Actor and The Alexander Technique*. The Alexander practice will consist of finding neutrality on the floor by relaxing muscles all over the body, guiding the body on how to stand up without adding unnecessary tension, finding a center of balance once standing, freeing the spine and hip joints, ease in walking, and leg/pelvis release. This experiment will consist of two Alexander Technique lessons/exercises a week, at 5 pm on weekdays unless a meeting with Barnes has been scheduled. These exercises will consist of varying physical explorations
designed to relieve muscle tension in the body and support awareness of movement and lengthening the spine.

**Results**

The goal of this work is to increase access to versatility of the actor by reducing habitual behavior. In order to gauge the growth in this area three separate mechanisms, designed to test the actor’s ability to reduce habits whilst stationary and in motion, will be administered. The first of which will be a series of bi-weekly meetings with Stage Combat Instructor David Reed wherein progress in tension/habit manipulation will be assessed. While the subject is participating in Stage Combat exercises/training Professor Reed will fill out a tensions/habits worksheet assessing the actor’s capability to perform stage combat without any habitual unnecessary tension. The habit sheet will consist of three questions: Is there excess tension?, Where is it located?, What is the severity on scale of 1-10? There will also be space for discussion of other habits observed or additional comments. The sheet is located in Appendix B on page 71.

The second form of testing will be a collection of bi-weekly meetings with movement Instructor Chris Niess to gauge tension/habit manipulation while stationary. In these sessions, the subject will be attempting to stand neutrally while Professor Niess completes a tensions/habits worksheet assessing the actor’s capability to stand without habitual unnecessary tension. This habit sheet is located in the Appendix C on page 73.

The final testing method will be a self-assessment journal complied of the notes taken after each session of movement methodologies, meditation, and mindfulness exercises as well as
rehearsal and show notes. The goal being to assess growth in habit recognition and the ability to manipulate habits.

By collecting data from these three resources there will be gradual increase in habit recognition, manipulation, and the ability to retain habit manipulation – leading to increase versatility in the actor. Additionally, by utilizing this methodology the practice of the individual exercises within this project should also lead to an increase in growth/ease of practice. The following chapter will present the data collected in “cycles” of 10-day periods.
CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

“Our awareness...is necessarily an abstracting process.” – Bruce Kodish

To accomplish the goal of increasing an actor’s versatility, this study is an amalgamation of materials drawn from a variety of existing practices, the results of which will be documented below. The data collected was compiled from journals and habit sheets (in the appendix chronologically B, C, D, E) and will be summarized in cycles spanning 10 days. As this methodology is process driven, it is important to document successes and difficulties within the exercises, realizations made in the moment, and how growth is manifesting itself outside of practice. To supply proper context for these notes, significant events (i.e. meetings with an Feldenkrais instructor/Alexander) will also be notated. The goal of this methodology is that a gradual increase in ease, awareness growth, habit recognition, and habit reduction will be seen at the end of this process.

**Cycle 1 - 11/4-11/14**

This initial cycle was successful in following the methodology laid out in chapter two consisting of: mindfulness activities provided were practiced a total of 40 times as well as 10 focused explorations of one of the five senses, CM and MM practiced for a total of 30 times (Days 1-7 at 15 min, Days 7-10 at 20 min), Feldenkrais and Alexander each practiced on three occasions (three hours total apiece). Execution of these practices was difficult. The chief difficulties seem to be related to the mind: restlessness, wandering mind, and concern about using the proper technique. An exception to this was Feldenkrais practice which, while being difficult, had the
benefit of being led by a professional. Barbara Hart coached a personal session which took place in her home studio and consisted primarily of floor work (after initially asking me to walk around the space to note habitual tendencies in my movement.) During this time Barbara also provided the Eileen Bach-y-Rita’s *Feldenkrais At Home* tapes for self-practice.

*Table 1: Review of Practices – Cycle 1*

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<tr>
<th>Review of Practices – Cycle 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meditation</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulties</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mindfulness</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Successes**                | • Similarly to meditation, over this ten-day period there was gradual improvement when focusing on individual sense awareness.  
• This week a mindfulness reminder took place twice in the same room while the existence of a piece of art was noted the first time (as being present), the second time the artwork was examined more thoroughly. This could be a sign of slightly improved awareness. |
| **Difficulties**             | • Post previously mentioned Art discovery, habit began to form of Art becoming first thing searched for every time the randomizer app goes off. This is a demonstration of product-based mindset and not conducive to mindfulness training.  
• Strong desire to perform the practice correctly—had the thought of “This is how I should be feeling/perceiving, why is that not happening?” This indicates end-gaining, which means that there is an outcome expected from the exercise—and that expectation is making it difficult to fully participate. |
### Review of Practices – Cycle 1

**Feldenkrais Method**

| **Successes** | Exercises revealed how interconnected the neck and the pelvis are, revealing that tension in one location can cause tension in the other. This discovery provides two majors advancements. The first being that it enhances an understanding of how the body works and thus how to use it more efficiently. The second being that it provides and additional tool for combating habits (i.e. if the neck is tense, an issue with the pelvis may be the cause.) |
| **Difficulties** | There was a notable habit discovered: any time a movement outside of the habitual norm would take place, unnecessary tension would occur. |
|                | There was a notable habit discovered: at the beginning of the practice the movements would consistently be too fast, leading to an over correction that used too much tension. |

**Alexander Technique**

| **Successes** | The abdominal wall and back exercises seemed to relax the body – back felt much more connected with the floor post-Alexander work. Using this technique seems to have assisted in relieving tension in the body that was previously un-noticed. |
| **Difficulties** | Unfortunately, the meeting with an Alexander Technique instructor has not yet occurred. |

**Rehearsal/Outside of Practice Notes**

| **Successes** | Throughout this cycle there has been an increase in the number of unprompted ‘Active-Awareness’ moments. This has led to multiple moments of habit discovery including: shoulders unknowingly tensed, facial contorting taking the shape of tension in the eyebrows/forehead, and leaning on a certain hip while performing in a staged reading. These habits most probably were happening prior to this cycle, but were first recognized after the beginning of this practice. |
| **Difficulties** | The unprompted ‘Active-Awareness’ is taking place after each habitual action has already happened. Hopefully, continuing in this practice can help stop this from happening before it happens. |

**Habit Worksheets – 11/13 – Located within Appendix B (Motion) and C (At Ease)**

| **Motion -** | Habitually sending unintentional messages about the character by habitually bending at the waist and carrying shoulder tension. |
| **At Ease -** | Slight tension in chest – but tension noted not as severe as the motion sheet. |
During this cycle: mindfulness activities were practiced as previously stated in Cycle 1. CM and MM were practiced for a total of 30 times (Days 11-13 at 20 min, Days 14-20 at 25 min).

Feldenkrais and Alexander were each practiced as previously stated in Cycle 1. As was expected, there was an overall increase in the ease each of these practices was performed – though with meditation a mid-week change may have caused this boost. There was a change in the intended focus of the meditation work, shifting “correct” or “incorrect” practice, to a ‘play’ activity. So far, recategorizing meditation from “work” to “play” on 11/20 has led to positive improvements.

During this cycle meetings with both Barbara Hart (Feldenkrais Instructor) and Missy Barnes (Alexander Instructor) took place. Barbara revealed that movements being performed as “slow” were riddled with tension. This was immensely helpful as it led to improvement in solo practice.

While Missy Barnes identified habitual tendencies in knees, hips, and shoulders – and recommended a new exercise to practice while not with an instructor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Review of Practices – Cycle 2</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meditation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Towards the end of this cycle there was a noticeable improvement in ability to avoid end-gaining and focus on meditating. The suspected reason for this change is the mid-week purposeful shift in focus from meditation practice being ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’ to a moment of play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulties</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Difficult to avoid judgmental thoughts, implementing the idea of ‘Non-Labeling’ during meditation for next week will provide a solution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mindfulness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A stimuli colleagues had mentioned for the past two years, was noticed that for the first time: the smell of hay on campus. Evidence of previously unreceived stimuli that is now being noticed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Review of Practices – Cycle 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulties</th>
<th>• During this cycle no notable difficulties occurred.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feldenkrais Method</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
<td>• During this cycle experimentation with “seesaw” breath was introduced to practice. This was movement required exploring breathing in unhabitual ways, which typically would lead to tension manifesting, however after the exercise there was a noticeable increase in the ease of breath. This could possibly be an indication of habit control, due to much less noticeable tension in the unhabitual movement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulties</strong></td>
<td>• In an analysis of current movement patterns, Ms. Hart revealed that movements being performed as “slow” were tension filled. The adjustment recommended was to change the mindset of the movements from ‘slow’ to ‘easy’ which, after being incorporated, led to improvement in solo practice as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alexander Technique</strong></td>
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</table>
| **Successes** | • Professor Barnes identified habitual tendencies in my body such as: keeping my left knee bent, leaning into my right hip, and tensing up the shoulders.  
• During this session, received a recommendation to use the semi-supine constructive rest position until more sessions can be scheduled. |
| **Difficulties** | • During this cycle there were no notable difficulties. |
| **Rehearsal/Outside of Practice Notes** | |
| **Successes** | • Noticed problematic habitual tendencies within the Castilian accent – most noticeably it drops on words like “ay, ay” “em” and “therefor”. This information created an opportunity to remedy the problem early on.  
• Within rehearsals there seems to have been an increase in the sense of ease within finding a proper stance while also remaining in character, which was previously difficult. |
| **Difficulties** | • An unconscious action took place while performing a thrust, the right ankle rotated in a way that hindered proper stance and did not portray the character of Don Pedro. To properly portray Don Pedro and maintain proper stance, this habit must be changed. |
| **Habit Worksheets – 11/13 – Located within Appendix D (Motion) and E (At Ease)** | |
| **Motion** | • Notable improvement – however a new specific combat habit formed during this cycle in the rehearsal notes is not noted in this work sheet, which makes me question the efficiency of these worksheets. |
| **At Ease** | • Notable regression – forward leaning stance due to attempting to recreate the “proper” posture as opposed to following the directive of “free forward and up” from Alexander. |
Cycle 3 - 11/26-12/6

The third cycle saw the continuation of the previous practice with the following scheduled change: CM and MM practice increasing from 25 min a day to 30 min a day on 11/27. However, a decision has been made to temporarily halt the Habits Worksheets for this cycle (and since winter break is about to begin, assumedly until January). While there was growth in the “motion” section in terms of overall noticeable habits during the cycle, it was clear a new habit had formed that was unlisted on this sheet. This brought the validity of the habits in motion worksheets into question – fearing that these sheets might present an illusion of growth rather than charting it clearly, most likely due to the limited sample size of once every ten days.

Conversely, the “at ease” section showed a regression. Upon comparing the notes from Professor Niess and reexamining the exercise it became clear that a ‘product’ mindset was present and causing an issue. The position of “neutral posture” had been incorrectly correlated to the feeling of a forward placement of the rib cage, which is seen within the drawing/comments given by Professor Niess. This is evident of mindless behavior being driven by a product mindset, when the sheets return it is expected this problem will be present.

On 12/3 the additional role of Wilmore – Cast B was added to this experiment, which is a considerable undertaking based on the size of the role and limited rehearsal times available. This produced a great deal of tension regarding both the scope of the work and its effect on the thesis project. The two primary reasons for this concern are: the scope of the role (hundreds of lines, thousands of words, new blocking, new accent, developing a new character), and the notes taken post 12/3 in this section (though these may be temporary setbacks). This is particularly worrisome for the Alexander Technique practice, as no additional meetings with the certified
practitioner have occurred. However, progress noted prior to 12/3 is extremely promising regarding meditation (increase in ease and acceptance.) There was also an increased sense of interconnectedness in regard to the development/practice of the mindfulness, meditation, and Feldenkrais techniques – as my experience within each of these methodology’s grows, so does my awareness of my habits. However, it has been difficult to secure an Alexander Technique instructor – which has caused concern about limiting progress (especially because soon this experiment will take place in Virginia, away from the instructor)

Table 3: Review of Practices – Cycle 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Review of Practices – Cycle 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meditation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
<td>Prior to 12/3- There a significant improvement in meditation practice, attributed to growth from the previous action of recategorizing meditation as “play.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulties</strong></td>
<td>Post 12/3- There became a noticeable increase in the difficulty to successfully focus. This is suspected to be due to the new workload/expectation, once this change is less immediate there should be a return to ease within this practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mindfulness</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
<td>There was an increase in awareness of how habitual tendencies affect the entire body. An example of this growth is a new understanding of how the left knee being bent changes the alignment of the entire body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulties</strong></td>
<td>There were no difficulties of note during this cycle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feldenkrais Method</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
<td>A notable question was posed in the tape that revealed a possible blind spot within the ‘Active-Awareness’ work being done- “How do your feet feel on the ground?” (also means this could possibly be missing in mindfulness activities?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newly introduced exercise involved encouraging exploration incorrectly as the feel the difference between the two. There was a sense afterwards that this increased the ability to notice when movement was not tensionless.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Review of Practices – Cycle 3

| Difficulties | • Overall exercise speed has slowed/ease increased except for the right shoulder. With previous knowledge that this is a location gathers tension within my body, this is unsurprising. However, if this moment of discovery allows additional focus during use of the right shoulder it may lead to decreased tension overall/increased ease in movement. |
| Alexander Technique | |
| Successes | • The constructive rest positions continued to be explored as was recommended. Post-Alexander exercises there does seem to be an ease when finding a neutral posture, however it is difficult to tell. |
| Difficulties | • Unfortunately, without access to an instructor it is difficult to tell how to efficiently practice these materials. |

| Rehearsal/Outside of Practice Notes | |
| Successes | • The Castilian accent was removed from Don Pedro. As the Castilian accent has been a part of the shown since the beginning, this will provide an opportunity to change a vocal habit that has been worked into the show. |
| Difficulties | • Notable difficulty removing habitual dialect from certain vowel sounds.  
• 12/3&12/4: Noticed habitual behavior appearing in Don Pedro – lack of mindful presence throughout rehearsal. |

| Habit Worksheets – | A hiatus until after winter break is in effect due to possibly providing misleading data. |

| Motion - | • To be continued. |
| At Ease - | • To be continued. |

### Cycle 4 - 12/7-12/17

The fourth cycle continued successfully following the methodology laid out in chapter 2 without any additional changes. A new concern also developed about being “habitual mindful” – or noticing remarkably similar things every time a mindfulness activity is precited. The added concentration of “noticing something new” in mindfulness exercises will be put into practice during cycle 5.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Meditation</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There was a noticeable increase in the ease of meditation once Finals had concluded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meditation practice prior to memorization seems to have a beneficial effect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulties</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There were no notable difficulties during this cycle.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Mindfulness</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Notable increase in the ability to be more aware of the stimuli being perceived- noticeable lack in moments where new information is observed that would have otherwise went unnoticed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulties</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Noticed a possible new habit developing of “this is what I notice when I practice ‘STOP’ or other mindful activities.” a sort of habitual mindfulness. The instruction of “notice something new” will be added to these practices, with the intention being to solve this by providing extra encouragement to examine surroundings fully.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Feldenkrais Method</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When individual movements were done as whole-body movements (i.e. moving an elbow – causing the whole body to move) there was a noticeable ease and lack of tension. This is not a preexisting habitual movement – and it did not fill my body with tension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulties</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An attempt to perform an exercise asking the subject to move eyes and head in different ways, a wall of tension occurred, which is a habitual response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Found that even after making certain discoveries about the Pelvis and Head connection, these discoveries necessitated repetitive practice to maintain. It seems as if Bach-y-Rita anticipates this, as the tape would remind the listener to keep the neck involved in certain movements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The more focused placed on taking notes, the more difficult it is to be mindful for the exercise itself.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Alexander Technique</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• During this cycle there were no notable successes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulties</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is difficult to gauge growth due to the lack of an instructor.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Rehearsal/Outside of Practice Notes</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• As the semester break began and rehearsals for The Rover stopped, the concentration issues that appeared on the 3rd dissipated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Review of Practices – Cycle 4

| Difficulties | • A growing concern is about the idea of becoming “habitual mindful.” This concern has developed from a noticing a repetitive pattern of stimuli taken note of at the beginning of each Mindfulness exercise specifically always looking for artwork first, or how the feet feel on the ground. It is worth noting that both have been discussed as previous blind spots before, so this seems to be an over correction, however this is becoming more apparent which could be a sign of Habit Change. Certainly, though, this habitual mindfulness could lead to not receiving certain new stimuli because its not one of the stimuli typically searched for.

• The newly realized fear of hindering mindfulness capabilities by attempting taking mental notations on exercises as opposed to actively experiencing them. This fear bares resemblance to the habit worksheet for at ease – wherein attempting to be tensionless/correct in posture to the point that another tension issue was created.

Habit Worksheets –
A hiatus until after winter break is in effect due to possibly providing misleading data.

| Motion -       | • To be continued. |
|               |                   |
| At Ease -     | • To be continued. |

Cycle 5 - 12/18-12/28

The fifth period was successful in following the methodology laid out in chapter two with no added changed. Exercises in this period took place in Virginia and yielded positive results. A moment of note during Feldenkrais work took place as successful self-identification and correction of an issue occurred with no outside assistance – a self-diagnosed and self-remedied habit. However, during Feldenkrais work it was possible to see the right knee moving the shorts fabric, however until focus was drawn to this location it happened unknowingly. Something that seems to be becoming clear is that this is a process, growth has not been linear.
### Review of Practices – Cycle 5

#### Meditation

**Successes**
- Within this cycle there was a consistent level of ease. This growth could be due to the accumulation of practice – it is also possible that being in a new environment with less distractions assisted in the level of ease.

**Difficulties**
- Within this cycle, there were no notable difficulties.

#### Mindfulness

**Successes**
- The level of ease was consistent with few exceptions for this cycle.

**Difficulties**
- A concern of note is that similar stimuli are noticed every time during mindfulness activities (carpet, posture in chair, art on walls, sound of dogs) – it is worthwhile noting however each activity did occur in the exact same location this cycle.
- There is still concern that this means there may be some ‘End Gaining’ taking place, and thus not being truly mindful. The plan will be to continue the concentration on finding new things during next cycle.

#### Feldenkrais Method

**Successes**
- While performing an exercise involving the lifting of the knee/lowering of the leg, there was a noticeable over working in muscles. This led to a pause and exploration of the movement until the easiest way was discover, this was the first self-identified mid activity self-correction.

**Difficulties**
- Notable moment - could see the knee moving the shorts but could not feel it – as usual this area is now constantly checked upon.

#### Alexander Technique

**Successes**
- In this cycle, there were no notable successes.

**Difficulties**
- The chief difficulty continues to be the lack of certified instructor.

#### Rehearsal/Outside of Practice Notes

**Successes**
- It is notable that this memorization/developmental process feels differently than in the past, as if the process of creating this particular character comes relatively easily.
- This session felt the easiest to practice yet – This could be to numerous factors including: less outside stress, Winter break, new location with no habits already established to distract from the work.

**Difficulties**
- In this cycle, there were no notable difficulties.

#### Habit Worksheets –

A hiatus until after winter break is in effect due to possibly providing misleading data.

**Motion**
- To be continued.

**At Ease**
- To be continued.
Cycle 6 - 12/29-1/8

The sixth period was successful in following the methodology laid out in chapter two. The Habit Worksheets are planned to be re-introduced again on 1/10. As fight captain for the show, a volunteer opportunity to host an in-person show fight tune-up session on campus occurred on January 5th. During that session, there was a noticeable an increase in the ability to quickly diagnose a habitual problem in stance and quickly provide advice on how to remedy those problems (another example of this also takes place on January 7th). Another notable improvement is seen within the ability to know how a performers body will execute an action before they perform said action, based off of their stance. However, the first day of rehearsal, January 6th, the habit of bending at the waist was visible in my body – this is attributed to the lack of sparring partner for a month, however if this note is given again later in the week it will be revisited. During this period, Barbara Hart was able to host another Feldenkrais session and commented on the improvement in the ability to fully explore the movement without rushing to the end. Combining that comment with the notes on feeling a growth in not end-gaining within my mindfulness/Feldenkrais work, indicates growth in regards to the ability to willfully enter a more mindful state.

Table 6: Review of Practices – Cycle 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Review of Practices – Cycle 6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meditation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• This cycle consisted of great ease in finding focus during the meditation practice – though an increase in ease was not noted as it stayed similar to the week before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulties</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Within this cycle there were no notable difficulties.</td>
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</tbody>
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38
## Review of Practices – Cycle 6

### Successes
- During these 10 days, a successful growth in the avoidance of end-gaining since the last session – leading to more successful practice.
- Noticed increased mindfulness in other areas (to be noted in Rehearsal notes)

### Difficulties
- Within this cycle there were no notable difficulties.

#### Feldenkrais Method

### Successes
- Barbara did comment about the improvement from the beginning of the training until now. Specifically, in the willingness to fully explore the movement without rushing to the ending.
- Explored chest breathing again, still led to increased ease afterward. Difficult to gage difference from first session to now.

### Difficulties
- When Barbara manipulated my body and tension formed instantly. Only when the tension was acknowledged was a gradual self-guided release able to occur. This could prove a hinderance in future sessions if tension remains the habitual response to new movements.

#### Alexander Technique

### Successes
- There were no notable successes during this cycle.

### Difficulties
- Lack of certified instructor.

#### Rehearsal/Outside of Practice Notes

### Successes
- During the 1/5 voluntary fight call, an understudy was having a hard time completing a certain move set. Upon examination it became clear that his stance was SLIGHTLY off one move prior to needing to take a lunge, limiting his maneuverability/power. We were able to slowly walk through the movement – the problem was able to be diagnosed would seem to be a product of the methodology used within this project.
- Another actor needed assistance with a certain move set. Upon examination it became evident that the actor was resisting breath, had tension filled movements, and was not starting with his body in proper stance. With this information, the student was able to achieve more ease within his movement.
- Tension in others is more easily diagnosable now, which begs the question “is that how I look when I am using more muscle than required.”
- An actor sought out additional help with a certain move set. The actor had been choreographed to attempt to draw his sword but accidentally endanger his compatriots in a comical way, however, he was still having a difficult time creating the desired effect. We found that if he moved his left foot downstage just a little bit more, the depth perception of the audience is deceived, and thus they can believe that he isn’t purposefully
Review of Practices – Cycle 6

- Stabbing at them. – Again, this extremely small movement created all the difference.
  - Starting to reach a point where it seems using physical cues, it has become easier to detect if a move will be performed correctly based upon how the body is positioned prior the move.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulties</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- During the rehearsal on 1/6, the habitual stance of bending at the waist when getting into proper stance resurfaced. Analyzing the movement and performing it slowly led to the realization that the pelvis habitually rotates forward when attempting to get into proper stance, which causes the body to tilt in a way that conflicts with the character of Don Pedro, who would have been trained in sword fighting to stand tall. This habit could stem from playing a character that used this posture while first learning stage combat. This is a realization about the pelvis rotation that helps immensely, as inhibiting pelvis rotation will be an actionable plan to neutralize the habit.</td>
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Habit Worksheets – Habit worksheets will be reinstated on January 10th.

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<tr>
<th>Motion -</th>
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<td>- To begin again January 10th</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At Ease -</th>
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<tr>
<td>- To begin again January 10th</td>
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Cycle 7 - 1/9-1/19

Unfortunately, January 9th began the put in rehearsals for Wilmore - VASTLY limiting the time available to perform these exercises due to class, student responsibilities, maintaining upkeep on the memorization of two roles. Therefore, sixth period was unsuccessful in following the methodology laid out in chapter two. Due to time constraints Feldenkrais and Alexander work needed to be paused, as did the scheduled return of Habit Worksheets. Mindfulness activities and Meditation practices were still in effect and practiced as specified in chapter 2, with the exception of the 1/14 – which will be noted below. Rehearsals and Tech provided numerous teachable moments as other actors would work through their movement questions, which prior to this process would have taken more time solve. Additionally, it should be noted
that throughout this cycle, many new habitual tendencies were noticed, which hopefully will lead to more control of them.

Table 7: Review of Practices – Cycle 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Review of Practices – Cycle 7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meditation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulties</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mindfulness</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulties</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Feldenkrais Method</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Difficulties</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Alexander Technique</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Difficulties</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rehearsal/Outside of Practice Notes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Difficulties</strong></td>
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Review of Practices – Cycle 7

- Prior to rehearsal on 1/14, there was not enough time to meditate and there was a clear difference felt in regard to mental clarity.
- During this cycle, it was notable that keeping the Wilmore accent separate from the Don Pedro accent was difficult. This was most likely due to the amount of rehearsal time required for the Wilmore lines, though now that this habit has been recognized, the plan will be to neutralize it.

Habit Worksheets – Habit Worksheets will not be collected this week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motion -</th>
<th>• To begin again January 10th</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At Ease -</td>
<td>• To begin again January 10th</td>
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Cycle 8 - 1/20-2/2

Unfortunately, time was extremely scarce across the final 12 days of this process. The final period was unsuccessful in following the methodology laid out in chapter two. Due to time constraints Feldenkrais and Alexander work needed to be paused, as did the scheduled return of Habit Worksheets. Mindfulness activities and Meditation practices were still in effect and practiced as specified in chapter 2. Throughout the remaining rehearsals and performances numerous examples of growth appear – particularly with habit recognition. Successfully retained changes in the fights that became necessary after a set change.

Table 8: Review of Practices – Cycle 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Review of Practices – Cycle 8</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meditation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulties</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mindfulness</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Successes</strong></td>
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</table>
# Review of Practices – Cycle 8

## Difficulties
- The first time *The Rover* performed for an audience it was difficult to use ‘Active-Awareness.’ A comedic moment did not go well, because it was ‘End-Gained.’ Instead of reacting honestly to what was being given, the line/moment happened in a habitual way.

## Feldenkrais Method

### Successes
- There were no notable successes during this cycle.

### Difficulties
- During this cycle there was not enough time to practice.

## Alexander Technique

### Successes
- There were no notable successes during this cycle.

### Difficulties
- During this cycle there was not enough time to practice.

## Rehearsal/Outside of Practice Notes

### Successes
- During the rehearsal on 1/22, the realization of a lack of proper use of the mindfulness technique took place. While the daily life mindfulness practices have appeared to boost a general awareness, it may have been compartmentalized to ‘off stage’ life. If a character is coming in with a strong objective, collecting new information and trying to solve problems, the character must be discovering constantly. New goal will be to discover something new during each performance to try to active a more ‘Active-Awareness’.
  - During the first dress rehearsal, a fight needed to be changed due to a last second stage design change. The old fight choreography was successfully changed into the new fight choreography. The old choreography did not habitually return though the move sets were similar.
  - Post 1/22 - Notable increase in ease when attempting to enter a mindful state while on stage acting.

### Difficulties
- During this cycle, the habitual action of moving the head slightly forward created additional strain. This has been noted before and seems to still be an issue.
  - During this cycle, a notable habit of embracing the drunkenness of character a bit too much was noticed. Specifically, during a moment of falling and a moment where an aikido roll takes place. The first fall was unsafely performed due to losing control about two inches from the ground, and a bruise formed. The aikido roll BEGAN perfectly however at the end of the movement my left thumb hit the ground. Performing these movements carefully is essential, cannot let the habit of allowing energy of the crowd to lead to recklessness. On the final performance date improvements were noted specifically: the show was high energy but the neck stayed relaxed and free, the fall was successfully executed, and the aikido roll did not injure the left thumb again.
### Review of Practices – Cycle 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Habit Worksheets</th>
<th>Habit Worksheets will not be collected this week.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motion -</strong></td>
<td>• To begin again January 10\textsuperscript{th}</td>
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<td><strong>At Ease -</strong></td>
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CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS

“What we attend to becomes more something we do and less something that happens to us.” – Bruce Kodish

Increasing the brain’s ability to notate and manipulate previously unconscious behavior is an invigorating field of study. For most people, the idea of harnessing more awareness/control over their habits would be intriguing. For actors, it is a necessity to increase their versatility. Luckily, journal entries from Outside of Practice notations within this methodology imply growth of that versatility, most notably in Cycle 5. While discussing the characterization process of Wilmore “developmental process feels differently than in the past, as if the process of creating this particular character comes relatively easily.” While this is promising, the question is, can this feeling be quantified in a provable way?

Quantifying success in a methodology that is governed by process over product can be challenging. To do so, data will be examined/analyzed below regarding the skills of habit recognition, manipulation, and retention of manipulation. Focusing specifically on each skill will allow for any improvements regarding versatility to be more easily documented. The subject should see an increased ability to diagnose habitual behavior both physiologically or ‘what’ and psychologically or ‘why.’ Being able to successfully diagnose ‘what’ was causing a problem physiologically, as well as also ‘why’ the problem as happening should lead to an actionable plan to manipulate it consistently.
Habit Recognition

As previously discussed, habitual behavior typically forms in reaction to lived experiences, becoming unconscious/repetitious behavior. For an actor, these habits can limit their versatility by hindering their conscious character choices. Increasing the ability to diagnose habits is vital, because a habit can only be manipulated after it has been identified, not before. In Cycle’s 1 and 2, many preexisting habits were identified and subsequently controlled. However, within the later Cycles, the habits recognized become much more specific – which allowed for more specific manipulation.

Initially, the habitual behaviors noted were rather large abrupt/noticeable behavior, primarily during ‘Active Awareness’ exercises within Cycles 1, 2: leaning on the hip, significantly tense shoulders, massaging a previously broken finger, plucking eye lashes. Both leaning on the hip and the massaging of the previously broken finger were noted not only in personal life but also while on stage - assumedly limiting the ability to perform individualized characters – which once identified, were manipulated to increase versatility. As the subject progressed into Cycles 4, 5, and 6 the habits recognized notably grew more specific and primarily were noticed on stage: words/vowel sounds causing dialect issues, how the bending of a knee was affecting the entire body’s alignment, leading from the neck, discovering at what point during an aikido roll control was consistently lost. By discovering these more intricate habitual behaviors, they were able to be manipulated - enabling a safer performance and more complete characterization. This growth in habit recognition within the body directly correlates with the growth of ease described within the mindfulness/meditation practices – Cycles 1 and 2 being difficult, while Cycles 4 – 8 saw a gradual increase in ease. Indicating that there was
perhaps a positive correlation that should be examined in the future to determine if the mindfulness/meditation had a direct causation towards increasing habit recognition.

During a sensory exploration focused on smell in Cycle 2, a distinct smell of hay was notated for the first time within the performing arts building – this served as a very tangible example of a recurring habit, ‘End-Gaining.’ In the Alexander Technique, ‘End-Gaining’ is referred to as being overly focused on what you assume will happen by participating in an exercise – that stimuli not fitting that goal is ignored and growth is hindered. The smell of hay notated in Cycle 2 had been commented on by colleagues over a year prior to that, however remained undetected until this moment. This indicates that the smell may have in fact been present and ignored due to ‘end-gaining,’ however it could also mean that this smell was notated for the first time due to the power of suggestion – searching for a product versus experiencing the process, or ‘end-gaining.’ The habit of ‘end-gaining’ would continue to be detected in various exercises, however once identified, was typically able to be manipulated. However, its constant presence and the confusion at times regarding how-to best counter it inspires more study.

Another noteworthy moment regarding the origins of habitual movement took place in Cycle 6. While attempting proper fight stance there was consistently an unconscious bending at the waist – which was problematic, as it communicated an unintentional message to the audience about the character. At this point, this improper stance habit had been noted multiple times by Professor David Reed. In Cycle 6 techniques rooted in Feldenkrais practice were utilized to discover what unnecessary movement was causing this issue. Upon repetitious, slow, practice with a focus on proper form, it was discovered that the pelvis was consistently rotating forward
unnecessarily – causing a bend at the waist. Once this was diagnosed in Cycle 6, the realization over the origins of the habit took place – eight years ago during the initial exposure to proper stage combat form, this habit of rotating the pelvis was learned for a characterization. This knowledge of not only ‘what’ was causing the problem physiologically, but ‘why’ the problem was happening led to an easy and actionable plan to manipulate it, causing an increase in versatility.

**Habit Manipulation**

Increasing the ability to manipulate habits is vital for an actor to reach their full potential. If a personal habit cannot be manipulated it limits the variety of individualized characterizations at an actor’s disposal. When initially starting this methodology during Cycle’s 1 and 2, it became clear that certain habitual actions were already malleable. Akin to the beginning habit of recognition, the noticeable physical habits of plucking the eyelashes and massaging the previously broken finger were quite easily manipulated due to an increased awareness of them – however this was not the case for all habits. Notations from Feldenkrais, mindfulness, meditation, and outside of practice notes indicate that there was a correlation between time spent practicing the methodology and growth in the ability to manipulate both physical and mental habits. This suggests that continued practice is key to prolonged progress within this work.

Growth within physical habit manipulation is seen throughout the work, but most specifically within the Feldenkrais and Stage Combat notations. Feldenkrais notations from Cycle 1 detail an exploration focused on the interconnectedness of the pelvis and neck, while stage combat notations also dictate a habitual bending at the waist while attempting to be in
proper form. However, as previously discussed in the habit recognition section, it takes until Cycle 6 for the connection to be made and the habit to be manipulated. This directly correlates with growth notated in Feldenkrais work by Barbara Hart, with Cycle 1 comments stating movements were ‘habitually tension filled and fast’ progressing to Cycle 6 notations which stated, ‘improvement in ability to fully explore movement without rushing to the end.’ This improvement within the ability to fully explore movements, led to an increased understanding of the body’s physiology/ability to recognize movement patterns, which led to habitual patterns being identified and manipulated with more ease. Indicating that continued practice within this methodology leads to growth within habit recognition. Additionally, during Cycle 6, notations relating to fight calls indicate an increased ability to identify a specific habitual movement pattern causing a negative result in others and then being able to advise them on how to manipulate that habit. Indicating that continued practice of this methodology leads to a better understanding of how the body moves, allowing for greater manipulation and identification of habits within the self, and possibly others.

The mental habit of end-gaining was noted and manipulated with mindfulness techniques discussed within this methodology. When end-gaining was notated within Cycles 1 and 2 of meditation and mindfulness, an actionable plan was put into place. During Cycle 2, the decision to actively recontextualize the practice of these techniques from ‘work’ to ‘play’ is notated, which provided gradual improvement in ease of practice, though there was still some end-gaining present. This led to further mindfulness technique implementation in Cycle 4, where the intention to ‘notice something new’ was added. The post-Cycle 4 mindfulness and meditation notations indicate the mindfulness technique implementation was successful, as end-gaining was
not as notated/detected within the work again in those practices. This serves as further supporting evidence that continued practice within this methodology leads to gradual progress in habit manipulation ability.

**Retention of Habit Change**

Retaining the manipulations of habit change is an important skill for an actor, as during performances the attention of the actor should be focused on what their character is trying to accomplish – not concerned about if their habitual shoulder tension is present. Developing the ability to retain habit changes is difficult, and even more difficult to quantify. The gauging of this skill became immensely more difficult after the additional role of Wilmore was assigned. The time limitations imposed by additional unplanned work caused habit worksheets to become permanently halted. Due to the unconscious nature of habits, it would have been beneficial to have obtained more Habit Worksheets - without those worksheets there was not an outside observer to determine if habits were being consistently manipulated. Time limitations also caused cessation of Feldenkrais practice after Cycle 6. Despite this, within Cycle’s 1 through 6, when the methodology was being practiced in its entirety, habits of both the physical and mental were gradually able to more consistently manipulated.

The physical habits identified in Cycle’s 1 and 2 - leaning on the hip, significantly tense shoulders, massaging a previously broken finger, plucking eye lashes – were manipulated using the Alexander steps of ‘Inhibition’ and ‘Giving Direction.’ This meant that once the habit was identified, additional ‘Active-Awareness’ was paid to the area in moments prior to now conscious habitual action, to redirect the habitual impulse for a different movement option. The
choice to incorporate the Alexander Technique and Mindfulness strategies led to the retention of
the manipulation of the physical habits. This indicates that continued practice of this practice
could enable greater retention of habitual manipulation.

The mental habit of end-gaining was identified in every Cycle. However, as previously
mentioned, the instances of end-gaining identified within Cycle’s 1 and 2 within mindfulness,
meditation, and Feldenkrais practices were able to be actively manipulated during this
methodology with improvement coming gradually from through Cycle 6. While actively
redirecting thoughts to ‘play’ and ‘find something new’ within these practices, it became
gradually easier to embrace an ‘Active Awareness’ consistently discovering more habits within
the rehearsal process through Cycle 6. Unfortunately, this aligns with increased stress and time
limitations due to the role of Wilmore – habits notated in Cycle’s 6, 7, and 8 were not as
consistently manipulated. The data collected from Cycle’s 1 through 6 however indicate a
correlation between continued use of this methodology and an increase the ability to retain habit
manipulations and welcomes further research to prove a causation.

Results

There is an increase in versatility documented throughout this process, however, it is not
a linear growth pattern. Through Cycle’s 1 – 6 there is a gradual increase indicated in the ability
to recognize and manipulate habits, which should increase the ability of an actor to embody
individualized characterizations and thus their versatility. However, when put under unexpected
time constraints which caused certain elements of the methodology to stop after Cycle 6, the
progress halted. These results indicate there is a correlation between consistent proper practice of
this methodology and gradually improves an actor’s ability to identify habits, manipulate those habits, and increase their control over retaining those habit manipulations.

As this methodology continues its development process to prove a causation of its findings, more data is needed. An effort should be made to analyze the Habit Worksheets and determine how to increase their accuracy, to reincorporate an outside observer to validate habit reduction. end-gaining was cited as a hinderance in every practice at least once throughout this process, so the connection between the concept of end-gaining and this process should be further explored. Additionally, analyzing possible causes of the synchronous growth pertaining to Feldenkrais and Meditation/Mindfulness work indicated within the notations. Exploring these ideas in greater detail within the next chapter should provide further insight into how to prove causation more efficiently, how to perform this methodology with more efficiency, and how the techniques are benefitting one another with more clarity.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

“There is an essential difference between consciousness and awareness”
– Moshe Feldenkrais

There is still much that is unknown about the unconscious aspects human behavior, this project attempts to demystify those behaviors. While this is an engaging topic for any person trying to gain a better understanding/more control of their awareness, it is of increased importance for actors – who make a living embodying entities that have their own unique habitual behaviors. The methodology developed for this thesis attempts to assist actors, or anyone interested, to increase their awareness and control of their unconscious habits. As a whole, this methodology proved fruitful – there is a correlation in the data implying sustained use of the practice has a beneficial effect on habit recognition and subsequently control. However, to maximize the benefit from participating in this proposed practice in the future, further analysis of the happenings within this study must take place.

Prior to a discussion on the future of this methodology, it should be acknowledged that the practice of this methodology was not flawless. This was primarily due to drastic unexpected time constraints which were placed upon this work, specifically the role of Wilmore. However, the time constraint of Wilmore was not the only challenge faced. Issues with the Habit Worksheets and the reoccurring habit of end-gaining require thorough analysis to determine how to best implement future alterations into this work to combat these issues. Once this analysis is complete, an action plan will be suggested to improve the analytical metrics utilized during the process and to increase the efficacy in the growth of habit recognition and control, as well as
areas for future study derived from possibly coincidental correlations/notations that want for more study.

**Challenges within the Process**

A discussion of the challenges faced throughout the process inherently necessitates commentary on the unexpected time constraint encountered after the project had commenced. Implementing two movement methodologies and a rigorous meditation schedule would have been difficult under the best conditions, let alone with the addition of the Wilmore character halfway through the process which consumed an enormous amount of time. In the initial phases of the plan 100+ minutes a day was to be set aside for practice during Cycle 1, increasing to 120+ minutes a day by the end of Cycle 8. Additionally, habit worksheets were to be filled out once a cycle by movement and stage combat professors, and consistent meetings with both Alexander and Feldenkrais teachers, which would have necessitated travel, were planned. Simply put, this was not accomplished. In fact, mindfulness/meditation were the only practices consistently being utilized post Cycle 6. However, with the information garnered from practice pre-Cycle 6, there are two issues that stand out necessitating further analysis: Habit Worksheets and ‘end-gaining.’

**Habit Worksheets**

One of the more disappointing outcomes in the experiment was the contradictions evident within the habit worksheets and the journal entries. Prior to the start of this experiment, it was assumed that habits, being typically unconscious behavior, had the possibility of being mistakenly notated as successfully manipulated - only to later discover they had not been. In an
attempt to preemptively address misleading results from journal notations, the idea for habit worksheets was formulated. In an ideal world, these worksheets would have captured growth of the ability to control habitual behavior both at-ease and in motion via an outside impartial observer. The goal of the at-ease habit worksheet was to gauge the ability to neutralize habits while focusing on habit control, while the motion habit worksheet’s goal was to gauge the ability to control of habits while performing other activities (not solely focusing on habit control.) Unfortunately, they were not successful. If the worksheets had worked as expected, they would have provided a checks and balances system to serve as supplemental proof for the data collected from the journals. The worksheets collected, instead, presented an image of unrealistic motion habit control progress, and drastic changes within at-ease habit control. To record more accurate data, the challenges faced in each of the habit worksheets will be analyzed. Once analyzed, a plan will be set in place to implement moving forward.

It is important to note that the motion habit worksheets showed a progression that was in line with expectations, however that was misleading. When examining the commentary provided from the Cycle 2 ‘Motion’ worksheet, there does seem to be an implied increase in ability to control/manipulate habits highlighted specifically the commentary “The remainder of the body remained mostly upright & forward. It was a noticeable improvement from previous sessions” (Appendix 3.3). This would seem to be the beginning of a positive trend, except the personal journals notate a different outcome. During the same Cycle David Reed, who was responsible for filling out the ‘Motion’ habit worksheets and serving as fight choreographer/director for The Rover – and gave me a note about a habitual bending of the ankle that was hindering my mobility in a fight being choregraphed. Professor Reed viewed the same actor multiple times during the
same cycle and noticed different habits each time, indicating the solitary habit worksheet per cycle was not sufficient. Additionally, a habit noted in the Cycle 1 ‘Motion’ habit worksheets, unnecessary hunching over, but not Cycle 2 ‘Motion’ habit worksheets reoccurs in Cycle 6 – further disproving the implied growth exhibited in the worksheets from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2, as well as the overall effectiveness of the worksheets.

The ‘At-Ease’ worksheets suffered from misleading results as well. Cycle 1 of the ‘At-Ease’ habit sheet operated as expected, however Cycle 2 demonstrated a regression that was also misleading. The Cycle 1 ‘At-Ease’ worksheets indicated that there was “slight contraction in pectorals forward, slight sitting in the lower back, center line a bit behind the load bearing spine” which are habitual tendencies that have been noted in me previously. However, Cycle 2 ‘At-Ease’ worksheet indicated there was a “slight shift forward onto the balls of feet, head and ribs shifted forward” with a picture drawn on for clarity. Not only were habits of this variety not noted in Cycle 1, but these habits were not pre-existing habitual characteristics. Therefore, a regression in the ability to stand at-ease was seen in the work, though this was inaccurate. The issue that arose was in the implementation of certain practice terms and a product-based mindset – ‘End-gaining.’ Taking the notes from Cycle 1 indicating a habitual stance that indicate slight off-balance stance, ‘behind load bearing spine,’ an attempt was made to imitate or produce the results of an assumed neutral at-ease posture – resulting in the forward shifting of the body. Step 5 of the Alexander Technique is ‘Recognition of Faulty Sensory Feedback’ – or that manipulating habitual tendencies such as posture, may cause sensory feedback to report feeling ‘incorrect’ – so although the ‘shifting forward’ was sensed, it was allowed to happen, because it was incorrectly postulated that personal sensory feedback may have been faulty.
While the habit worksheets were both halted due to misleading data, there is still value to incorporating them in the future. Unconscious habits could easily be undetectable via the lens of the self, therefore outside observation is needed to avoid bias in the results. Luckily, the challenges that arose within the worksheet notations are clear enough that they can be countered without extreme alterations to the current methodology. For the next iteration of this methodology, additional habit worksheets would be randomly applied during each cycle in order to remedy the issues arising from the motion worksheets and implementing more consistent ‘Active-Awareness’ techniques for the at-ease worksheets.

As it is undeniable that a process focusing on habit control while in motion requires an outside eye for unbiased results, increasing the motion worksheets efficacy is paramount. The two cycles that utilized motion worksheets were ineffective, because of the limited use of habit worksheets. A single habit worksheet every 10 days from an outside perspective, allowed for misleading appearances of growth. This is supported by the fact that Professor David Reed was in charge of both marking the ‘Motion’ worksheets as well as fight directing a show the subject was performing in – and different habitual notations were present in the worksheet than the personal notes from rehearsals. Instituting additional motion habit worksheets would help there be less chance of that a singular worksheet could indicate overly positive or negative data due to the additional volume. Additionally, by making them randomly assigned it would limit the subject’s ability to modify behavior with an increased ‘Active-Awareness’ due to the knowledge of ‘being graded.’ Relieving the pressure of knowledge that ‘this time it is being marked for the experiment’ will lead to a more genuine representation of habit control.
Random habit worksheets will not solve the challenge present for the at-ease worksheets. The premise of the at-ease worksheets is to gauge growth of the ability to stand neutrally, while focusing on the goal alone. However, that ability was not able to be accurately gauged because of ‘End-gaining.’ Within the ‘At-Ease’ notations, the subject attempted mimic the feeling within the body that existed when they had earned praise for proper neutral stance – the subject did not attempt to stand at-ease. What this indicates is that the largest issue with the at-ease habit worksheets within this trial, was that they were paused in the first place. It is possible that if more time had passed while utilizing this methodology these at-ease habit worksheets would have become more accurate, and in fact provide an opportunity to demonstrate effective growth of the ability to manipulate ‘End-gaining.’

End-Gaining

It is unsurprising that end-gaining was prevalent during this process. This is because at its core end-gaining is a product-based mindset and a thesis will have to end in a product, therefore separating the desire for evidence of success/product and the act of participating in this study is a challenge. This methodology is rooted in process-based practices that reject product-based mindsets– meaning end-gaining is counter intuitive and counterproductive to the success of this methodology. Examples of end-gaining from within the work will be analyzed with the goal of establishing the scope of the challenges end-gaining presented within this process, leading to solutions on how to best counter end-gaining moving forward.

Within the early cycles, end-gaining examples stemmed primarily from concern over performing an activity correctly. However, it is worth noting that practice within the Feldenkrais Method, which had more consistent guidance from a licensed professional than the other
methodologies, did not seem to indicate the same level of end-gaining problems as the rest. Within mindfulness and meditation practices the first two cycles were hindered by ‘End-gaining,’ as concerns over feeling/perceiving the “right” things dominated the focus of the practice. Similarly, the success of Alexander Technique practice was diminished by concerns of practicing the method “correctly.” This is troubling because it indicates that during the initial cycles of a process-based methodology concern about the final product interfered. However, when compared to Feldenkrais, the difference seems to be the presence of an instructor. Because while those concerns were felt within the Feldenkrais work, outside guidance was given to alleviate the pressure of determining proper technique from the student – presumably enabling a more mindful approach to the process while also providing some of the more conclusive growth documented from an outside source within this experiment.

The act of end-gaining was also notated within the outside of practice notations. During the later cycles in particular end-gaining manifested in several forms which will be expounding upon below, specifically: complications with accent work, losing track of certain physical actions before their conclusion, and missing certain acting moments. These examples provide multiple vantage points by which to view the problem, and fully grasp its scope. Once these examples are analyzed it will hopefully lead to an action plan to solve it – by treating the causes.

In Cycle 3, an example of end-gaining was clearly notated while attempting to remove the Castilian accent from Don Pedro. Certain vowel sounds and phrases had been habitually worked into the characterization, so while on stage if an ‘Active-Awareness’ was not being maintained, the accent would slip causing a negative effect on the overall characterization. This habit was consistently identified while pronouncing the names Florinda and Callis – characters
who Don Pedro interacts with often. This habitual pronunciation of the names implies that end-gaining within the actor was causing a less than full ‘Active-Awareness’ throughout time on stage, as the character would know how to pronounce his siblings and close servant’s name. This diagnoses however helped later as within Cycle 7, during the final rehearsals, the accent in development for Wilmore had begun to sneak into Don Pedro scenes/runs. Being able to comprehend that this was ‘End-gaining,’ as opposed to an incapability to separate the two proved fruitful, allowing mindfulness ideas to be implemented to regain ‘Active-Awareness.’

end-gaining was also notated during certain moments of physicality during performances, most notably being a drunken aikido roll. During the scene, an intoxicated Wilmore would lunge to hug another character, however he misses and rolls out of the maneuver. Unfortunately, once put in rehearsals on the main stage began in Cycle 8 the habit of end-gaining was noticed within this technique. Concentration began to lapse during the roll before it was completed, presumably due to preparation for the next line. This assumption of completion prior to actual completion is textbook ‘End-gaining.’ This was able to be remedied during the shows final weekend utilizing mindful ‘Active-Awareness’ during the newly realized habitual mindless behavior, providing an example of end-gaining manifesting itself within physical actions – and being remedied.

Additionally, end-gaining caused certain moments of humor to be missed within performances. During a moment of staged bravado, the character of Don Antonio was mimicked/mocked by the character of Don Pedro, typically to much success. However, during the first performance for an audience in Cycle 8 the moment was lost to ‘End-gaining.’ Instead of an honest mimicry of the stimuli given, a preplanned mockery of a previously received stimuli took place, damaging an otherwise clearly defined moment. This was also remedied by ‘Active-
Awareness’ being brought to the moment in question for the remaining performances, providing an example of end-gaining impacting acting moments, and the identification of it resulting in beneficial growth.

What is evident in these examples is that end-gaining is present throughout the process, in the practice as well as performances. The identification of it seems to increase the versatility of the actor, as they are able to use mindfulness tools to limited end-gaining once it has been identified. When examining the anxiety-based end-gaining within the practice, the clear next step is to incorporate more professionals into the program. This is rooted in the idea of utilizing outside coaching to alleviate responsibility on the practitioner to monitor their own form whilst in practice, thus enabling more process focused mindset. Additionally, being able to end-gaining as the root of various problems vocal, physically, and while acting on stage proved beneficial in that it demystified the mindless behavior/habitual tendencies enabling greater manipulation/implementation of techniques to remedy the issues using mindfulness techniques. What still requires more testing in the future, is if continued use of this proposed methodology will limit the overall amount of end-gaining present in future performances. Going forward, examining if there is a correlation between extended use of this study and less instances of end-gaining is recommended.

**Future Study**

In addition to answering some of the irregularities of the experiment, data collected indicates that further study is necessary to better utilize the techniques within this methodology. While compiling the notations from Chapter 3 there were unexpected findings related to the use
meditation and mindfulness techniques. Cycle 4 indicated that meditation prior to memorization work had a positive effect, which was not an intended effect during the formation of this methodology and thus should be examined to determine if this is a direct causation. Additionally, synchronous growth within meditation, mindfulness, and Feldenkrais work was unexpectedly strong and wants for further study. These two examples were chosen to serve as jumping points for future areas of study, though there are undoubtedly many more contained within this work.

While examining the positive effect meditation had on memorization efficiency, it is important to note that no positive progress was recorded until Cycle 4 – implying gradual use of this methodology may be correlated with this effect. Cursory research into possible reasons for sustained meditation practice leading to increased memorization capabilities indicates that the results could predominantly be due to stress. Meditation has been shown to have positive effects on reducing stress while stress has been shown to negatively affect memory. Consistent meditation practice prior to memorization should be utilized in the future to see if there is a direct correlation.

Additionally, the link between Feldenkrais and mindfulness/meditation requires a more in-depth investigation, as there appears to be a correlation of growth between the two practices. This would mean that the synthetization of Feldenkrais and the mindfulness/meditation techniques had the beneficial effect anticipated at the beginning of this experiment. As mentioned in Chapter 1, concentrative meditation was implemented within this methodology in part because of research suggesting that it could possibly expand the time between receiving a stimulus and reacting to it – increasing the ability to control habitual behavior. When examining Cycle 6 Feldenkrais notations, the commentary indicates that growth occurred, ‘improved ability
to fully explore the movement without rushing to the end.’ This implies the act of meditation assisted Feldenkrais growth. Further study is necessary to determine meditation’s effect on motor function and end-gaining, as a beneficial correlation could indicate that meditation prior to somatic movement methodologies would be beneficial.

Initial research into a possible correlation between growth within Meditation and Feldenkrais practices led to ‘Integrated Body Mind Training’ or IBMT. This technique has been shown to demonstrate improvement in mindfulness, behavioral control, as well as improving physical and mental health, and is being studied currently by Dr. Tang, a neuroscientist whose meditation research has been referenced consistently throughout this thesis. Dr. Tang states that within IBMT practice “mindfulness is not a concept; instead, it is a direct experience prior to one’s conceptualization” (Tang 2). This statement directly correlates with the Feldenkrais belief that “The delay between thought and action is the basis for awareness.” (Feldenkrais 45) The similarities do not end there. Tang references the effects of Tai Chi practice sharing commonalities with the positive effects of IBMT practice, Tai Chi is a martial art that Feldenkrais has master prior to developing his method. These techniques also make use of instructors to guide exercises and the use of self-awareness throughout the movement explorations. While this does not prove that practice of the Feldenkrais method would provide the same benefits as IBMT practice, the similarities want for more research. At the moment, the Feldenkrais Method has not been found to have any scientifically provable positive health benefits, however, this could be due to limited study. If the Feldenkrais Method was found to be a form of IBMT, a scientifically backed methodology, it could drastically increase its use in theatre training.
**Final Thoughts**

This methodology is not a finished product but rather a process, just like the practices that make it up. Thus, this initial testing/experiment should be looked at as a methodology in its infancy. Filled with promising notations of correlations but needing maturation to prove causations. In the methodology’s attempt to increase the ability to harness more control of the human awareness processes and use that advanced awareness to control unconscious habitual behavior, the results indicate success but spur the desire for more research and testing. Discovering if the implementation of the new testing parameters that are discussed in this structure will go a long way towards utilizing this methodology to prove more than a correlation but a causation. Additionally, pursuing testing to determine if proper practice of the Feldenkrais Method would yield the same results of IBMT is imperative – as it could affect the growth and spread of the methodology. Luckily, this project’s process-based design allows it to remain malleable and grow as more research comes along to further support the search for expanding control over our awareness processes.
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APPENDIX B:
HABIT WORKSHEET 3.1
Tension/Habits Worksheet
Motion (stage combat)

Do you notice any excess tension? 

Yes

Location of tension: Your (stand up!!)

Severity of tension 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Do you notice any excess tension? Yes No

Location of tension:

Severity of tension 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Additional Tension:

Additional Comments:
It really is a matter of upright positioning of the body.
It implies character where there is none intended.

(If more space is needed feel free to write on back of page.)
APPENDIX C:
HABIT WORKSHEET 3.2
Tension/Habits Worksheet

At ease (standing still)

Do you notice any excess tension? Yes ☐ No ☐

Location of tension: Slight sitting in lower back - center line a bit behind head bearing spine

Severity of tension 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Do you notice any excess tension? Yes ☐ No ☐

Location of tension: Slight contraction in pectorals forward.

Severity of tension 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Additional Tension: Slight SCM

Additional Comments: Slightly in feet

(If more space is needed feel free to write on back of p. e.)
APPENDIX D:
HABIT WORKSHEET 3.3
Tension/Habits Worksheet
Motion (stage combat)

Do you notice any excess tension? Yes No

Location of tension: Shoulders / Arm

Severity of tension 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Do you notice any excess tension? Yes No

Location of tension

Severity of tension 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Additional Tension?
- The remainder of my body remained mostly 
- upright & relaxed. I was able to maintain the ground from previous sessions

Additional Comments?

(If more space is needed feel free to write on back of page)
Tension/Habits Worksheet

At ease (standing still)

Do you notice any excess tension?  

- Yes
- No

Location of tension: Slight shift forward onto balls of feet, head, ribs shifted forward

Severity of tension 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest):  1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Do you notice any excess tension?  

- Yes
- No

Location of tension: a bit of contraction (upward and forward) in upper trapezius

Severity of tension 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest):  1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Additional Tension?

________________________________________________________________________
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Additional Comments?

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ENDNOTES

1. Muller, Barbara C.N., Gerasimova, Anastasijua, Ritter, Simone M. *Concentrative Meditation Influences Creativity by Increasing Cognitive Flexibility.*, Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts, 19313896, 20160801, Vol.10 Issue 3

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