

# GRATITUDE JOURNALING PRACTICE: A REFLECTIVE *CURRERE*

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In this work, I reflect on the concept of gratitude within the academic setting. Through the practice of journaling, I explore the past, present, and future using the *currere* method as a framework. I inquired into life events that influenced the development of gratitude. To begin, I asked, “How do I practice gratitude? How do I know if I am grateful? When I practice gratitude, do I feel, think, and behave differently as an educator?” To frame this work, I leaned into the work of Pinar (1975) who developed the *currere* method. Pinar (2012) states that the method is for teachers and academics who aim to grow personally and those who seek to constantly reconceptualize and understand the impact social change has on our lives. He states,

The method of *currere*—the Latin infinitive form of curriculum meaning to run the course, or in the gerund form, the running of the course—provides a strategy for students of curriculum to study relations between academic knowledge and life history in the interests of self-understanding and social reconstruction. (p. 44)

To practice *currere*, there are four moments to consider “the regressive, the progressive, the analytical, and the syncretical” (Pinar, 2012, p. 45). Together, they frame opportunities to reflect and wonder about one’s autobiographical presence in the experience of education. As well, it is a time to heed the interrelationships of our practice and life events (Pinar, 1978). An individual can quietly move in and about the four moments of *currere* with the goal of growing self-knowledge and gaining insight into issues. One can pause longer in some moments, reflecting deeply.

## GRATITUDE

Gratitude is generally understood as a broad, complex concept (Bono et al., 2012). It is considered a positive universal human attribute debated for centuries by philosophers, religious leaders, and theologians (S. Allen, 2018). Emmons and McCullough (2003) describe gratitude as

derived from the Latin root *gratia*, meaning grace, graciousness, or gratefulness. All derivatives from this Latin root “have to do with kindness, generosity, gifts, the beauty of giving and receiving, or getting something for nothing” (Pruyser, 1976, p. 69). The object of gratitude is other-directed—persons, as well as to impersonal (nature) or nonhuman sources (e.g., God, animals, the cosmos) (p. 377)

Howells (2004) argues that learner and teacher gratitude enhances learning, especially when students learn to apply the concept. Ramzan and Rama (2014) reported a relationship between gratitude and wellbeing in public university professors. Grag et al. (2022) sought to understand the gratitude effects in the workplace of university teachers with resulting suggestions of how to embed gratitude throughout the work setting.

Gratitude is also understood as having “a moral affect because it results from and stimulates behavior that is motivated by a concern for other people’s well-being” (McCullough et al., 2001, p. 559). Howells (2004) states that a teacher’s gratitude in

their community or home life is not separate from their teaching roles, each affects the other. Gratitude is also understood as being a positive experience on health and wellness. It is described as more complex than joy, though joy is foundational to development of gratitude (Emmons, 2014a). Emmons also states that to be thankful for life is to be thoughtful and be attentive to understanding gratitude. Emmons and Stern (2013) elaborate our understanding of gratitude as having a transcendent and worldly meaning.

In its worldly sense, gratitude is a feeling that occurs in interpersonal exchanges when one person acknowledges receiving a valuable benefit from another... [and] the transcendent meaning of gratitude is widely recognized in the major spiritual traditions in which thanksgiving is a worldwide response to life. This fundamental spiritual quality to gratitude, which is at the core of every major religious tradition, is aptly conveyed by Streng (1989): “In this attitude people recognize that they are connected to each other in a mysterious and miraculous way that is not fully determined by physical forces, but is part of a wider, or transcendent context” (pp. 5, 846–847)

In practice, gratitude when expressed toward another may include thoughtful statements: “thank you for reviewing my syllabus, that was helpful; thank you for chairing, I was not prepared; or thank you for doing the guest lecture, the students appreciated your expertise.” As well, gratitude may be expressed in giving of a gift or a written card as an expression of thanks. Emmons (2007) states this expression of gratitude:

for life’s blessings—this is, a sense of wonder, thankfulness, and appreciation—is likely to elevate happiness for a number of reasons. Grateful thinking fosters the savoring of positive life experiences and situations, so that people can extract the maximum possible satisfaction and enjoyment from their circumstances. Counting one’s blessings may directly counteract the effects of hedonic adaptation, the process by which our happiness level returns, again, and again, to its set-point, by preventing people from taking the good things ... for granted. (p. 35)

In turn gratitude can also be expressed toward one’s belief in a higher power, a God of one’s understanding, a transcendent being, fate, Mother Nature, and the earth (S. Allen, 2018; Emmons, 2007, 2016). For example, this gratitude may be expressed as a prayer “thank you God for the earth, the beauty, the ability to walk gently on the earth this morning as I plan my day. Thank you for the creatures we see living on the earth” (See Image 1: Morning Walks to Pray and Plan the Day).



Image 1: Morning Walks to Pray and Plan the Day (Photo)

Finally, scientific research on gratitude as a practice continues to grow (Emmons, 2007, 2022; Nelson & Lyubonirsky, 2016). The benefits of gratitude are many and are described as being experienced physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually (Emmons, 2014a, 2014b). However, Manela (2015) also makes a good point in that one who receives the kind gesture from another, may in turn feel indebted to the giver, thereby, evoking negative effects of gratitude. The receiver may not respond with positive words or gestures of thankfulness for a gift, thereby, leaving the giver with negative feelings related to the expectation of gratitude. The thought that gratitude generates negative emotions is not generally a first-thought when we discuss gratitude, being grateful, or thankful. Generally, the practice of being grateful, through written word, speech, acts of kindness, or cognitive thinking is understood to evoke positive thoughts and feelings that in turn benefit us in other aspects of life (Emmons, 2007). It is this positive understanding of gratitude that led to framing this reflective *currere*.

### REGRESSIVE: THREE SHORT STORIES

In the last year I experienced several events that moved me spiritually. They are day-to-day occurrences, nothing dramatic, just living. Together, they afforded opportunity to express gratitude through the practice of journaling (poems), art, and photos.

#### GRATEFUL TO BE ALIVE AND BE

I try to start each day by “making it a day of gratitude” (Al-Anon Family Groups, 2008, p. 47). This work is difficult, as it nudges up against my need to breathe and my propensity to be ponderous and quiet. During the pandemic, I wrote in poetic form as an expression of life:

I am a broken self, that enjoys a strong cup of coffee when my feet, first hit the floor.

In these moments I look outside into the darkness of the early morning, the last stars fading.

I pull on my Cowichan Tribes hand knit sweater, zipped close to my neck.  
 Running shoes on, I head into the bush, the early light dawning  
 The last of the owl calls, clearly heard.  
 I am cold, the early March winds blow wildly down Kluscap Mountain, I breathe  
 deeply.  
 I search for early buds on the maple trees, the pink and red buds swollen.  
 There is no membrane between the earth and my feet.  
 I plod over the earth, the moss, and hop streams.  
 Tree roots aim to trip, I gently place my feet between their roots.  
 I yearn to be, breathe, and belong, my energy rich, ready to be shared.  
 The earth and atmosphere give me one more moment.  
 One more hour,  
 One more day.  
 And, I remain a broken self  
 Grateful for my breath.

#### *SPIRITUALLY AWAKENED*

Later in the spring, I travelled to Egypt for business. As the pandemic lockdowns and travel restrictions eased, I carefully planned this trip with my peer. We arrived and attended to the academic business at hand, enjoying the warm sun and beauty of the city. During this trip, my peer insisted we visit the garbage city. With a skilled driver leading, we were driven past the waste sorting zones to visit the garbage city in Nahshiyat Nasser and the Monastery of St. Simon the Tanner (Leven, 2006; Wilacek, 2020; Zanzottera, 2020).

I was not prepared for what was to unfold. I was initially fearful while we moved past the piles of recycling, the trucks and donkey carts piled high, and people sitting, working, and observing. As we arrived in the city, I was silenced deeply, in awe of the stone carvings. I experienced a spiritual awakening made poignant by the peoples' eyes. My chest began to hurt from the angst, tears flowed.

After walking with my peer, we stood silently in veneration inside the sanctity of the auditorium carved into the rock. This is a space and place where Coptic community street workers and faith-based organizations work together within the distinctive odor of waste. I was humbled. It was as if I were floating in a space unknown to the rest of humanity, yet it is a well-known place. I was spiritually moved and cried in response; my friend offered reassurance. I wondered,

Who am I in this space, a privileged nurse educator from Canada? I have enough food and water and clothes. Why, when visiting the monastery, does it remind me of my purpose as a teacher and educator. How would I explain this trip to students?

I felt like an intruder, not knowing the history and culture of the Zabaleen. I wondered, "Was I grateful for my life, breath, and for being?" I felt as though I was being reformed, refreshed by a power greater than myself.

In the last hours visiting, I prayed. I talked quietly with my friend. I felt an embodied sense of needing to move. I looked in wonder—unable to capture in my mind the vastness of the church (Church of Saint Samaan the Tanner, 1994). A soccer ball raced past, nudging me from my tears. Cries of excitement followed, and a group of young soccer players in brightly coloured shirts raced past. Soccer, this I knew. I stood up from the church bench and took in several deep breathes. I joined the energetic group of

boys. Soccer is universal, a game I played with my siblings and friends through spring, summer, and into the early months of snowy Canadian winters. My physical tensions diminished as I tried to keep up with the children. The driver watched me nearby, the tall white woman in a long skirt and running shoes playing soccer. I felt awkward, yet the emotional and spiritual responses were tumultuous, unsettled, and were not yet fully understood. Later, I journaled extensively. In my writings and sketches, I sought to understand my responses—physically, spiritually, and emotionally. During this visit, I re-named my journal, my gratitude journal.

### *THE WINDS PREVAILED*

Some months later, a hurricane, caused extensive damage in Atlantic Canada. I sat quietly in the basement of our home as the winds rose to deafening levels, the electrical sources out for eight days. I calmed my fears by continuing to journal in the notebook I had used in Egypt. I wrote, “I wonder how I will remain or be grateful if we lose our home?” This questioning was over-laid with memories of my visit to the Monastery of St. Simon the Tanner. I prayed for safety of our friends and for our community. We had prepared our home as recommended putting away garden and vegetable pots and lawn chairs. As the storm raged, peas and beans hung in the garden ready for winter storage. Tomatoes ripened in the warm sun, were whipped by the winds. Shades of brilliant blue, purple and yellow of gladiolas, cosmos, marigolds, and roses swirled circularly in the wind. Valiant grapes ready for the first frost to deepen their taste, dropped to the earth; I could imagine the taste of grape juice in the deep, cold Cape Breton winters. Yet, as the hurricane pounded the earth, the trees were whipped around, damaged forever (See Image 2: Trees Sustain Damage).

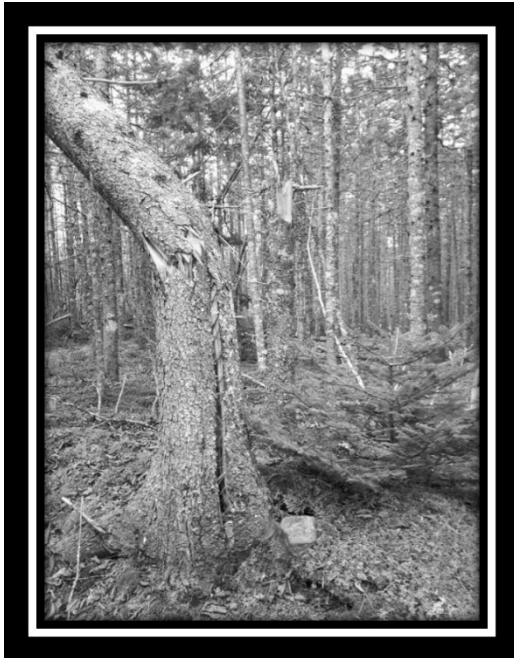


Image 2: Trees Sustain Damage: Whipped to the Heart (Photo)

### PROGRESSIVE

Upon returning to my island home and university classroom, I discussed with students and peers my spiritual awakening. I heard myself saying, “You have to know what you believe as a nurse. You do not have to be an expert, but you must know how to ask patients about their spirituality. You have to be able to ask patients what their preferences are for their spiritual care.” This awakening changed my response to home, work, and in my creative space. I talked with my peers and friends about how I felt different—spiritually. I shared about my trip to Egypt and the role of my gratitude journal. I explained that my journaling reflected a new enlightened focus. I related to the learners how I leaned into my journaling and sketching during the hurricane. I am a person who journals, yet for me, the journaling focus was renewed; it was not the same. I understood more clearly my intentions when sitting and writing; each note reflected my growing care for my family and my higher power. Sketches reflected transcendent beings, spiritual entities—“this entity protects me, reminds me to be thankful” (Journal notes, July 2022). I felt uplifted. I felt as though my spirit was changed, more positive. Therefore, I imagined continuing my journaling and sketching activities and searching the literature on gratitude to further understand the concept.

I also wondered how the study of gratitude would be accepted by the academic community. I am writing in a time when I experienced increasing pressure to perform as a tenured professor (Berg & Seeber, 2016); and I am not immune to the pressures in the academy. I also know that I worried about criticism when writing about spiritual and emotionally laden topics. Yet, Emmons (2022) reminds us to reach out for support during these times and when practicing gratitude. He states: “after being self-sufficient for so long and then experiencing difficulties, I eventually sought assistance from some individuals, who assisted me” (p. 49).

### ANALYTICAL

In my gratitude journal, I reflected on notes written in efforts to frame the spiritual lingering that hovered around my soul when I pondered. There was a tension within, a tension I did not fully understand. I held close to my heart a sense of awe made poignant after visiting the garbage city. It took time to express and process these emotions. Berg and Seeber (2016) remind us that as academics working on projects, writing is “often the expression of the deepened understanding which some individual has acquired, through much reading, discussion, and reflection, on a topic which has been in some sense ‘known’ for many generations” (pp. 55–56). Interesting, I did not feel pressure to write daily or perform in my journaling; instead, I focused on the language of gratitude, terminology, and images created (Emmons, 2007, 2022). Using pen, paper, paint, and colored pencils, I journaled and sketched about the blessings of my family, the earth, the ocean, gardening, access to potable water, and time to read and write. As well, I reflected on God. I needed to know that there was a power greater than myself caring for me, looking out for me, and guiding me during times when I did not understand. These positive beliefs offered me reassurance when life did not seem kind or easily understood (Emmons, 2016). (See Image 3: Early Dawn and Fishing Day)



Image 3: Early Dawn and Fishing Day (Acrylic on plywood)

In analysis of my journal notes, I noted a shift in my search of writings related to gratitude. “I yearn to understand the complexity of gratitude” (Journal, August 2022). I also reflected on the power of the act or practice of journaling as an academic. Emmons (2007) discusses efforts needed to contribute to nurturing gratitude in one’s life. The first effort is to start a gratitude journal. The second is to remember the bad, or challenging times; this concept was more difficult. Though it seemed smooth and comforting to journal, I knew I was not fully prepared to understand the bad or negative feelings. Yet, Emmons offers comfort by asking, when “remember[ing] the bad” (p. 191), why would one want to remember these difficult times? He asks us to consider the following response:

Why would remembering the worst that life offered be an effective strategy for cultivating gratitude? Because it capitalizes upon natural mental tools and normal human thought processes. For one, psychological research has established the empirical truth that “bad is stronger than good.” Negative stimuli often evince powerful reactions that can be difficult to ignore or surmount. The adversities of life, seasoned with strong emotions, are deeply etched in our memories and for this reason are easy to recall. (pp. 191–192)

Was it the difficult emotions that I did not understand? Was it the negative, the bad, the sad, the difficult that I was struggling to comprehend (Manela, 2016). As I reflected, I clearly did not, and do not understand the complexity of the Zabaleen, the traditional waste (garbage) collectors of Cairo, who recycle up to 80 percent of waste (Fahmi, 2005; Fahmi & Sutton, 2010). I do not understand storm events when the people and the earth are harmed and damaged. How was I to be grateful now?

#### **SYNTHETICAL, RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF LIFE MOVING FORWARD**

My life today as an academic remains full of questions about gratitude. However, I seek to be more grateful to others, expressing sincere thanks. I pray more and sit

reverently looking at the beauty of the mountains, trees, and flowers that surround. I continue to write poems as my form of finding voice and a space for contemplation (Finley, 2011). I wondered, “What is it about reflecting on life events that leaves an impression on my life?” Is this not the purpose of the *currere* method? I think so. I asked myself, “Why can I see the faces of the children energetically playing soccer in dire conditions? Why can I now freely describe my spiritual experiences? Why can I share with students and my neighbors the experience of visiting the Zabaleen? Why do I say that reflecting and learning from life events, have changed me?” Now, when I hike into the bush, I am more aware of the earth’s spirit and energy. I pray in thanks, with a sense of gratitude for having both my feet on which to walk. I float on the deep moss as I hike, grateful to my higher power. (See Image 4: Moss, Floating, No Membrane Present)



Image 4: Moss, Floating, No Membrane Present

As a result of the storm, our communities sustained significant damage to the power sources, roads, bridge infrastructures, and homes. Yet, we were safe, blessed, I said. Yet, I continued to feel burdened and overwhelmed by the recent events of travel and the vastness of the storm. I continued to revisit the literature discussing the journey of the Zabaleen in policy, research, health, and education studies (Klein, 2020; Leven, 2006;). I asked myself, “Had I not just visited the Monastery of St. Simon and visited the garbage city, would I not be more grateful for my quiet life? What could I learn?” And the negative feelings associated with being “too blessed” and “not thankful enough” for our health and safety was my response. I was burdened, uncomfortable with worldly possessions, and all that had been given to me, family, music, art, education, faith, and health. My response was emotions that were “associated with itchiness or guilt, [and



were at times] ... uncomfortable or painful” (Manela, 2016, p. 130). Why then as the storm passed, did I feel sad, with a deep angst inside? Had we not just come through a hurricane with minimal damage? Why then in a post storm frame of mind was it so hard to sustain my sense of gratitude? Emmons (2007, 2022) states, practicing gratitude is daily, moment-by-moment work. Should I not now be a more grateful for my family, home, and the land on which I live? Why was this such a difficult time spiritually? I wondered what were the obstacles that were impeding my being grateful. I understand myself to be in process and continuing to process gratitude.

### DISCUSSION

Engaging in the reflective *currere* phases has helped me come to understand the concept of gratitude with deeper meaning. This is important work, as in the academy we are being shaped, and changed, socially reconstructed by life events (Pinar, 2012). Utilizing the *currere* process was effective in supporting the reflective activities needed when seeking to understand how life events impacted my self-growth and reconstructed me as an academic (Pinar, 1975). By engaging in the *currere* process and focusing on gratitude, I grew as an educator.

### STORIES OF GRATITUDE IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS

In the literature, there are authors who express gratitude—their writings a shroud of comfort as I grew my understanding of gratitude within the academy. In community college, I was introduced to the writer James Allen (1920/2021) and his work, *As A Man Thinketh*. In this insightful book, James reminds us that “in the ocean of life the isles of blessedness are smiling, and the sunny shore of your ideal awaits your coming. Keep your hand firmly upon the helm of thought” (p. 90). He also focuses on the strength of our minds:

It is suggestive rather than explanatory, its object being to stimulate [people] to the discovery and perception of truth that “they themselves are makers of themselves” by virtue of the thoughts which they choose and encourage; that mind is the master weaver, both of the inner garment of character and the outer garment of circumstance, and that, as they may have hitherto woven in ignorance and pain they may now weave in enlightenment and happiness (1920/2021, p. 9).

Exley (1992) in her study on happiness, cites Richard Wagner who states, “Joy is not in things; it is in us” (p. 37). As well, Nancy W. (1992) in her writings on recovery from trauma, reminds us that, when we are “overwhelmed by past and present feelings, thoughts, and experiences and feel most vulnerable” (p. 115), we can be grateful and affirm who we are through the gift of acceptance. She states that by accepting this gift one can be kinder, gentler, and nurturing to self and others. A family friend, Joan Levy Earle (2016) in her book, *Jack’s Farm*, leaned into journaling and painting when expressing gratitude for life and later in grief with the sudden loss of her dear husband Jack. In these times she returned to writing, creating, and publishing all embedded with gratitude. Johnson (2002), in her study of the experience of grace in our lives, reminds us to cultivate our thinking of thankfulness. Using a gardening analogy, she reminds us to weed out the negative, yearn for the good and kind and to plant flowers to bring joy.

Michael J. Fox (2002), the well-known actor, expressed gratitude for his family, friends, and peers when sharing his memoir and journey alongside chronic illness.

He discusses the complexity of life, the slow progression of Parkinson's Disease, and associated discouragement; yet, he remains thankful. Finally, Dalton (2022) a professor and director, curator of the Acadia University Art Gallery, studied the life of Maud Lewis. Lewis is a well-known Canadian artist. Dalton writes so eloquently of hope and joy when she discussed Lewis' brightly coloured art:

The art of Maud Lewis brought light into her simple, rural life. It reflected an inner light that found joy in memories and imagining of rural Nova Scotia, and the animals, landscapes, and activities that define country life. It brought light into the lives of those who saw and acquired her work, and who passed her wondrously painted home. (pp. 24–25)

### *PRACTICING GRATITUDE*

To practice gratitude in the academic setting, whether in writing, voice, or action, to another or to reference a higher being can be challenging, even when we know the benefits to our wellbeing (Bono et al., 2012; Emmons, 2007; Howells, 2014). Grag (2020) focused on the role of gratitude for teacher leadership and education. They reported, education on gratitude was a necessary for overall teacher development and “for all seven dimensions of educational leadership (i.e., Inspirational Motivation, Idealized Influence (attributed), Idealized Influence (behavior), Individualized Consideration, Intellectual Stimulation, Contingent Reward and Management by Exception)” (p. 895). They further argued that more research focused on gratitude within the academic setting is needed. For students the discussion on being spiritually awakened was openly shared, an opportunity to encourage others to understand their spirituality and expression of gratitude. Finally, Emmons (2004) reminds us that studying gratitude as a virtue

is not as active as most (courage and generosity...), nor is it an ongoing disposition to behave in a socially responsible or congenial manner (temperance and truthfulness...). We do not usually think of it as being cultivated as a habit (although some of its superficial trappings, such as saying “thank you,” obviously may be), and (like many virtues) its status as a virtue as opposed to an emotion is in much dispute.” (p. vi)

### *GRATITUDE IN ACTION*

Emmons (2007) discusses practical activities in which we can engage to nurture gratitude in all elements of our lives. These are applicable to our lives as academics. To grow one's gratitude, it is encouraged that one journal and ask yourself the following questions: “what I have received from [a person's name], what have I given to [another, and] what troubles and difficulty have I caused” (p. 192). These questions guide us to learn to understand gratitude to another and to a transcendent being. In addition, Emmons, recommends learning prayers of gratitude, and having present visual reminders such as pictures, photographs, or collage. As well, he recommends we grow our language of gratitude and choice of verbal expression. He encourages us to pay attention to life, now—in the moment, to breathe, and to be thankful. In this moment, I understand that some of my journaling was more of a to-do list, a log of tasks to be completed, a list of articles to read, papers to be graded, and meetings for which to prepare and contribute.

Emmons (2016) further discusses actively seeking gratitude, looking for joy, and receiving the good and kind gifts and in turn giving back to others around oneself. He

states that this is possible when we start by being grateful: “to feel gratitude, we have to be attuned to the good in our lives, and this gives rise to joy, which is the pure and simple delight in being alive” (p. 67). Finally, Emmons states these active cognitive experiences may awaken joy from within, in “all our senses, energizing the mind and body. Both gratitude and joy reflect a fully alive, alert, and awake state of attunement between self and the world, which is necessary for sustainable wellbeing” (p. 68).

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Emmons and Mishra (2010) state, “gratitude is foundational to well-being and mental health throughout the lifespan [as evidenced in] accumulating evidence” (p. 249). This is relevant to our lives as academics. They state that having “a sense of contact with a divine power, and sentiments (e.g., beliefs that all living things are interconnected) independent of specific theological orientation” (p. 253) grows our positive health and wellbeing. Emmons (2016) also challenges us to receive the good around us “without crippling feelings of indebtedness, embarrassment, or a sense of inferiority” (p. 70).

Finally, more research on the concept of gratitude is needed within the academic setting (Grag et al., 2022). Through the study and cultivation of gratitude I feel and seem happier. This is ongoing work, moment-by-moment. As an academic, I recognize my journal writing has shifted to reflect gratitude for day-to-day events, positive and difficult events. I wonder through journaling, how they are changing my spirit, my relationship with my God as I understand, and as I continue to work to apply what I have learned from this study. This is a journey, not yet completed. Allen (1902/2021) states,

The weakest soul, knowing its own weakness, and believing this *truth that strength can only be developed by effort and practice*, will, thus believing, at once begin to exert itself, and, adding effort to effort, patience to patience, and strength to strength, will never cease to develop, and will at last grow divinely strong. (p. 59, emphasis in original)

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### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Munroe and Slavich (2019) state life events include stressors experienced internally or externally.

<sup>2</sup> Kluscap Mountain defined:

After the Mi'kmaq world was created and after the animals, birds and plants were placed on the surface, Creator caused a bolt of lightning to hit the surface of Wsitqamu'k. This bolt of lightning caused the formation of an image of a human body. It was Kluscap (gloos-cap), first shaped out of the basic element of the Mi'kmaq world, sand. (Mikmaw Spirit, 2016, para. 5)

<sup>3</sup> The garbage city is an illegally built “inner city at the foot of the Cairo Mokattam Hills in the Manshiyat Naser district (covering 5.5 km<sup>2</sup>), known as the Garbage City, because of the recycling of waste, which is the main source of livelihood, as an informal economy, for the local Coptic Zabbaleen community” (Wilacek, 2020, p. 102).

<sup>4</sup> “In the zabaleen area there is a monastery and one of the largest churches of the Middle East, St. Simon the Tanner, which is built into the rock. The area has developed significantly over the last 30 years. With the help of foreign donors, people received credits to purchase recycling machines. Houses were built and the standard of living has risen” (Howeidy et al., 2009, p. 51).

<sup>5</sup> The cave church is at the top of the mountain Muqattam, one of the highest peaks in Cairo (Klein, 2020).