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Decolonizing Pedagogy by Appropriating Yoga. The Role of White Women in Search for Social Justice within Higher Education

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The influential educator Paulo Freire believed liberation from preconceptions was one of the primary goals of education (Freire, 2006). Committed to social justice, Freire claimed that education is "the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (Freire in Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 141). Yoga can also be seen as a form of education that is profoundly concerned with freeing the individual from his or her preconceptions. Yoga is an East Indian philosophical system of self-knowledge that has many branches and includes complex theories of human learning and psychology (Dalal, 2001; Krishnamurti, 2003). The different branches of yoga prioritize distinctive practices that become the primary method of seeing the world free from our preconceptions. The tools of yoga include: yoga postures, breathing practices, meditation, yogic diet, ethical precepts, self-study, as well a wide range of contemplative practices (Leggett, 1990; Ravindra, 2006).

Yoga has moved into the classroom as a pedagogical tool with the power to enhance learning (Brockington et al., 2003; Cohen, 2006; Counihan, 2007; Hassel, 2017; Saoji, Mohanty, & Vinchurkar, 2017). When presented as a pedagogical tool, yoga is often incorporated under the larger umbrella of "holistic teaching" (Duvall et al., 2007). Holistic approaches to education can include incorporating silence, narratives, creating sacred spaces, learning from nature, joy in the classroom, and attempts to integrate knowledge from various traditions across the globe (J. Miller et al., 2005). This may be as simple as incorporating a yogic breathing practice to calm and "center" students prior to a writing exercise (Counihan, 2007) or using meditation as tool to enhance the classroom experience (Moore, 1992; Rockefeller, 2006; Sarath, 2003; Sun, 2019; Zajonc, 2006). Academics are also incorporating the physical postures of yoga as a tool to integrate the body into the classroom (Behmer, 2019; Cohen, 2006; Helberg, Heyes, & Rohel, 2009; Zupancic, 2007). Educators interested in yoga for its pedagogical potential may not be interested in the larger socio-historical forces or philosophy that shapes the discipline of yoga. Yoga is redefined as secular pedagogy that is significant because of its potential for developing a more humane way of learning that develops the student's capacity for self-awareness, which is critical if one is to see their role in participating in oppressive societal structures (Cariaga, 2019; J. Miller et al., 2005; J. P. Miller & Nozawa, 2005; Orr, 2002; Vacarr, 2001).

Some East Indian scholars have criticized educators who view yoga as a series of practical practices to help students regain mental clarity or deal with stress. This secularization is viewed as misrepresenting yoga's

in-depth spiritual and religious ties (Ramaswamy, Nicholas, & Banerjee, 2007) and "violently uproot[ing] truths from their contexts" (Hatcher, 1999, p. 35). Euro-American scholars counter this perspective, saying modern yoga is a product of "capitalist production, colonial and industrial endeavors" that was designed as a transnational product with wide appeal (Antony, 2014; Jain, 2016, p. Paragraph 1). Globalization has created a situation in which diverse cultural and theoretical lenses impact how individual educators think about pedagogy. Yet, the process of bringing new pedagogical practices into institutions of learning can de-center the individual by calling into question their role and commitment to Western values of education.

Despite ongoing controversy over secularization, what is clear is that yoga has moved from being a "subject studied" to a "practice in the classroom." The purpose of this research was to understand the meaning educators make of using yoga as a pedagogical tool. Yoga's use in the classroom exposes the interplay between religions (Douglass, 2010), but it also highlights North American innovations in learning, interest in liberation and concern with reproducing colonialist cultural values. The aim of this research was not to uncover one "right" way to view yoga as pedagogy, but instead to allow the diversity of responses to co-exist. In *The Location of Culture,* Homi Bhabha asks:

> How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities where, despite shared histories of deprivation and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even in commensurable? (2006, p.2).

Democracy holds competing ideas in dynamic tension, weighing which ones will be disseminated in our institutions of learning. The presence of yoga in North American institutes of higher education signals a change in how Euro-Americans think about the location of knowledge. By focusing on descriptions of yoga as pedagogy, this research study contributes to the understanding of how higher education's colonialist legacy impacts pedagogical strategies that strive for social justice.

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METHODS

This research explored the meaning of yoga as pedagogy through analyzing eighteen interviews in which the educator's described the use of yoga as pedagogy and through descriptive statistics that highlighted characteristics of educators who are using yoga as pedagogy. To be included in the study: 1) All participants must have used, or be using yoga postures, yoga breathing practices and/or yoga meditation(s) in courses they have taught within higher education in North America. 2) All participants that were interviewed needed at least one year's experience practicing yoga, but they did not need to be trained as yoga teachers. 3) Educators were from any gender, ethnic, class or religious background.

Data Collection

The qualitative component of this research is based on eighteen interviews from a convenience sample. A semi-standardized interview format allowed questions to be reordered, and the wording of the questions to

be flexible. The interviewer and participants were able to ask questions and make clarifications. The narrative function of language and storytelling as it unfolded in the interviews was used to reveal the meaning of yoga as pedagogy for participants. The interview questions were structured to understand how the pedagogical choices of faculty were rooted in experiences both inside and outside of the classroom and how they interpreted those experiences.

To enhance the context of the descriptive work in this study, a self-administered online questionnaire was used to collect data on a larger group of educators who use yoga in the classroom (n=117). The survey was distributed to interview subjects who referred colleagues across North America to approximate a random sample. The addition of the survey helped identify simple relationships and patterns between variables so that the qualitative data could be understood in relationship to the descriptive statistics collected.

Data Analysis

The data was downloaded to Excel to explore 1) univariate analysis (exploration of one variable, such as gender) and 2) ordinal scales (ordered to the degree with which participants possessed certain characteristics). All quantitative data was integrated, or nested, within the qualitative data to help describe the meaning of yoga as pedagogy. The analysis focused on the ways that the data expressed a "community" of values, or norms among educators who are using yoga in the classroom.

In keeping with the model of the data analysis spiral (Creswell, 2003), the data was analyzed throughout the process of collection. The interviews were conducted between 2007-2010 and transcribed shortly after their completion. Once the data collection officially "closed" the data was read through in its entirety and coded using Atlasti, qualitative software. In the first phase of analysis four themes emerged with the highest frequency: transcultural influences (72), critique of higher education (45), student need (46) and colonialism (37). The descriptions illuminate how pedagogical change (including the acceptance of diverse ideas) happens and is justified in North America. A secondary axial analysis was conducted from 2018-19 which focused on the largest demographic integrating yoga in higher education, white women. In this narrative analysis, a single theme emerged of how white women integrating yoga as pedagogy were seeking social justice in an educational system that replicates colonialist values.

RESULTS

Yoga as pedagogy emerged at the nexus of competing world views (that of the faculty and the institution they worked for) and perceived need of students. The primary demographic integrating yoga as pedagogy was white women with more than ten years' experience in higher education who had secured regular teaching positions within their college. Participants in the interviews were 69% female and 87% white Euro-Americans; numbers that closely aligned with the survey results (see Table 1). Individuals integrating yoga as pedagogy were often well established in their disciplines; 63% of participants had been in higher education for over ten years (see Table 3) and 64% had the rank of assistant professor or higher.

Table 1

Gender and Use of Yoga

	Percent	Count
Female	72%	83
Male	28%	33
Transgender	0%	0

Table 2

Ethnicity and Use of Yoga

	Percent	Count
Mixed Ethnicity	3%	4
African-American	1%	1
Asian	7%	8
Native American	2%	2
Middle Eastern	0%	0
Caribbean	0%	0
Latino	1%	1
White	86%	100
Pacific Islander	0%	0

Table 3

Length of Time in Higher Education

1 year or less	2-3 years	4-6 years	7-10 years	≥10 years	Count
5% (6)	6% (7)	12% (13)	14% (15)	63% (70)	111

Table 4

Position at the College or University

	Percent	Count
Adjunct Professor	15%	17
Instructor or Lecturer	22%	25
Associate Professor	22%	25
Assistant Professor	16%	19
Full Professor	26%	30

Cultural Appropriation or Appreciation

Using yoga as pedagogy raised concerns as to whether integrating yoga into the classroom was cultural appropriation, or an acknowledgement of yoga's acceptance into North American society. White, women faculty did not see themselves as participating in the colonialist legacy of adopting customs, objects, or

ideas from colonized cultures, free of the cultural context. One female educator was first made aware of concerns about cultural appropriation when she submitted an article for publication about her experiences using yoga as pedagogy. The anonymous peer reviewers raised concerns about the use of yoga postures as a method to better understand feminist texts. The reviewer saw her use of yoga as:

> …a kind of Orientalism, because I was taking this practice [of yoga] out of context. They wanted to know why I didn't teach the literature of the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* or the *Yoga Sutras*? They claimed that 'you can't take ideas from one tradition [Western feminism] and put them next to a series of *asanas* that actually have a context and a history and a spiritual lineage of their own (Personal communication, March 8, 2010).

…most of the white female educators expressed surprise that their use of yoga as pedagogy could be seen as part of the colonialist tradition of appropriation.

Indeed, most of the white female educators expressed surprise that their use of yoga as pedagogy could be seen as part of the colonialist tradition of appropriation. Some female educators were quite adamant that the integration of yoga was "traditional." As one respondent said:

> I certainly don't think of it [yoga as pedagogy] as colonializing or re-interpreting. I mean I am reinterpreting nothing. I am taking the teaching as they are, and as I understand them and feeling like I have this wonderful opportunity to offer them in a way that is completely true to the tradition as I understand it (Personal communication, October 25, 2006).

The genuine surprise that white women educators express at allegations of cultural appropriation is best understood in juxtaposition to statements made by the East Indian academics who were interviewed. These individuals often questioned the assumptions underneath yoga's use as pedagogy. One professor stated:

> One part of being a [yoga] practitioner is the question of our relationship to the text. I see the [yogic texts] as a spiritual source of authority. That doesn't mean divine revelation in the absence of humans, but I think there is a tension between the academic modes of seeing the text as an artifact. The presupposition is that texts are exclusively a human construct and therefore the emphasis is on which humans put it together, and what were the influences that caused them to put it together. A lot of academic teaching is contextualization and reductionism and I see the text as encapsulating experiential information - genuine yogic experiences…how do these individuals see yoga? In other words, what do they see it as? Is it purely intellectual, like Greek philosophy? Or do they see texts like the *Upanishads* and *The Yoga Sutras* as coming from a place of enlightenment, the *shruthis*, a place of spiritual awareness (Personal communication, April 9, 2010).

This quote challenges viewing yoga as "practices" that one can master and control; yoga, is a spiritual practice to be lived. One East Indian educator pronounced that yoga as pedagogy was "framing yoga to fit or as part of the Western model [which] is somehow okay, because then you've colonized it" (Personal communication, September 22, 2006). East Indian men using yoga as pedagogy were more interested in challenging notions that their cultural legacy was inferior. One educator stated:

> The Eurocentric bias, is that Western civilization is superior. That is not stated, but is implied. The idea that all other traditions didn't make it. What means and how these civilizations are rated varies. But somehow even if you don't have a criteria by which you

> are measuring, you presume your civilization is better and therefore that your education is better, your healthcare is better, your medicine is better, your arts and culture is better, your music is better (Personal communication September 22, 2006).

The white women interviewed were not ignoring cultural difference, but seeking to find the context in which both traditions could retain their superiority. One educator explains:

> Whether we like it, or not, all of us are influenced by Western education. The concept of comparative learning, critical thinking is important and we can't sacrifice that. We can't give anecdotal stories, research methodology is important. We need to adopt criteria that works, adopt a criteria that is objective, analytical, and we need research. But, the reference point of critical thinking is limited. It doesn't mean the Eastern authors are better. I am not talking about better. I am talking about having curriculum that is truly cross cultural; allowing the pedagogy to express the legitimacy of different ways of knowing. Why can't we find the legitimacy in multiple traditions? Why can't we find philosophical explanations in multiple traditions? (Personal communication, September 22, 2006).

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White women most often included yoga as pedagogy with the intention to rise above the individualism, mistrust and alienation from one's self that they saw as part of higher education. One educator who works in an Environmental Studies Program explains:

> So many of us are alienated from our feelings, breath, body and thoughts. We are alienated from other people and the environment. The broader meaning of these [yoga] practices is that the individual starts to get the intellectual idea that we are interdependent. When you do the practices you start to experience the here and now, you start to realize that when you act, you are affecting other people (Personal communication, April 7, 2010).

Another educator stated:

> My experience is that when I am not in my body I am living from a fragmented place. Living from a place of separation, where what my mind wants to do is actually different from what my body wants and is feeling in the moment – this leaves me feel an undercurrent of anxiety, something in between anxiety and terror (Personal communication, January 30, 2010).

Yoga in the academy raises genuine questions about cultural appropriation, but rests on cultural appreciation.

Yoga in the academy raises genuine questions about cultural appropriation, but rests on cultural appreciation. White women did not view yoga as an element of their spiritual lives, or the texts of yoga as sources of spiritual authority. Yet, they integrated these practices as a method to challenge pre-conceptions their students might hold, and as a praxis with the potential to help students and themselves to rethink the institutional values that shape our lives.

Amending Identity in Higher Education

Ashis Nandy was one of the first intellectuals to associate colonialism, not so much with sovereignty over another nation, but with a state of mind (2004): feelings of superiority, feeling powerless to change the system, lack of trust, fear of loss of control, the need for stability and dualistic thinking (Breault, 2003). The colonialist legacy impacts those in higher education, in part by offering a limited repertoire of tools that can expose the psychological challenges it imposes (Breault, 2003; Rasmussen, 2002; Sandoval, 2000; Smith, 1999). The white female educators who were interviewed for this study began their explorations of yoga out of an attempt to amend aspects of their identity that were unfulfilled by the time consuming nature of their professional role. One educator who works at a four year college explained:

> The academic world that I had been promised of ideas and an intellectual community was completely subordinated to a kind of hum-drum teaching students who didn't really want to be there and were totally unmotivated. My colleagues were burnt out and jaded. I was in this awful work environment. I thought I have to do something that is not the job otherwise I am going to burn out (Personal communication, March 8, 2010).

The educator turned to yoga, which has since made its way into her courses as pedagogy, and has been the subject of one of her academic articles.

Participants in this study believed that higher education asked "too much" of those who participated in the system: excessive teaching commitments (4), grading (2), evaluations (2), committees (1), dealing with politics (7), meeting the needs of students (9), and too little time to redesign curriculum (5). Participants acknowledged that adding yoga to the curriculum was little more than a patch in a system that promoted competition. As one educator who teaches in social sciences stated:

> My role as a professor is challenging. I feel like it asks for everything that is antithetical to being peaceful, or in tune with one's self, or in unity. It really pushes me to be competitive. It is a competitive environment. I aim for collaboration, and community, but in the end higher education is still individuals doing work, accomplishing individual goals - yoga in the classroom won't change that (personal communication, January 30, 2010).

Having a personal practice of yoga was viewed by educators as a method to gain insight into their own personal agency in a system that demands submission. Participants criticized higher education as "a lot of ego" that is encouraged by the university through "competition" and "politics that undermine and discourage creative thinking and intellectual risk taking." As one participant explains:

> Higher education is very hierarchical, but they also like to pretend that they are not. They are quiet mystified institutions. This makes it hard, for junior people especially, to see what is going on. They are incredibly competitive. They are competitive for very scarce resources that have a disproportionate impact on your work…The trouble with academia is that, well, in our system we are literally competing with every other colleague in a zero sum game for merit increases. If one of your colleagues has a really good publishing year, it takes more money out of the pool and there is less available for you. The competition is completely explicit; there is nothing subtle about it. And if you do really well there is no culture of praise or recognition. You are on your own (Personal communication, March 8, 2010).

The competition that is encouraged by professionals in higher education appeared to take a toll on how faculty felt about their individual performance. As one participant stated:

> There is a level at which people [in higher education] often end up feeling like they have no idea of how they are doing, but it is probably badly. Basically we have to fight tooth and nail to get ahead and to get ahead of the other people who are supposed to be their peer group. It is all very disillusioning (personal communication, March 25, 2010).

The philosophy and practice of yoga gave educators a tool with which to deal with their fear of being "less than," "not good enough" and "other" in the academy. As one educator who teaches courses on yoga philosophy states:

> Yoga has the concepts of *atman* [the aspect of self that is not identified with the materialistic world] and *jiva* [the living being], what is that all about? It is about recognizing that fragmentation is part of the [higher education] system. We embody this fragmentation. It becomes part of who we are. Yoga asks us to look at this fragmentation, to understand it, but know that our journey doesn't stop there. We cannot identify with fear, ego, and competition and think well, or feel well. We have to find out for ourselves who we are, and operate out of out an inner sense of security; we can't find that outside of ourselves (Personal communication, February 25, 2010).

The white female educators integrating yoga into higher education were unique in their desire to have their personal integrity and creativity align with the institution; they wanted to create opportunities to "do" education differently. They were not directly challenging "the system," but attempting to subvert the expectations of higher education, while retaining the financial and status benefits of working in the field. One educator stated, "It is extremely tiring because every word you write or speak, you have to evaluate and measure it out; it comes to a point where you end up towing the line so you can earn a decent salary" (Personal communication, September 22, 2006).

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Faculty experienced some fear and anxiety not knowing their status within the organization, but felt confident that through the practice of yoga they would be able to address, and articulate their concerns. Through the practice of yoga, the individual becomes better able to personally *manage* their stress. One participant who works at a private university stated:

> In higher education a successful person is someone who can successfully manage stress. Yoga is positioned as a tool with which they, by which we, can do this [manage stress]. Yet, this takes pressure off looking at the issues that are contributing to living in a chronically stressed state. I often wonder - should we look at that? What should we do with the knowledge that higher education promotes stress? (personal communication, May 5, 2010).

The interview participants viewed the system of higher education as continually producing situations in which the individual feels fear and stress. As one educator who works in a private university stated:

> Yoga's popularity is increasing and it has to do with the chaos going on externally. We finally brought it into our consciousness that we are ruining the planet, and that we really are unstable economically; all of this fear causes people to rush to do more things, but the

> foundation of right living isn't there. We are seeking freedom from these fears in the practice of yoga (personal communication, February 26, 2010).

Integrating yoga as a pedagogical practice challenged the educators to reconcile their personal ideas, beliefs and agency within the expectations and boundaries of higher education.

"The System" of Higher Education

All of the participants in this study viewed themselves as alone in a system that demands competition, superiority, lack of trust and fosters fear. Participants expressed feeling pressure not from their coworkers, but from the "system" of higher education. The system was defined as needing one to be inauthentic to one's own views, or as one participant worded it, "to be other than one is." Integrating yoga as a pedagogical practice challenged the educators to reconcile their personal ideas, beliefs and agency within the expectations and boundaries of higher education. As one educator who works in a private university states:

> There is a certain sense of authenticity in my yoga practice. I realize that if I am doing a posture or using yoga as self-inquiry there is no incentive to fake it. Yoga is about really figuring out what is going on with me, and there is no reporting back to anybody. I think that this type of authenticity can be translated into academic inquiry…we need to be as honest as possible, and not doing forms of inquiry where we say, "I know already what I want to find, so I'll get the data together," or "I'm doing this for the professor," or "I'm doing it for an audience in the back of the recesses of mind who is going to buy this book; [In yoga] there is no one to impress, no one to hide from (Personal communication, May 5, 2010).

The white, female participants articulated that the system of higher education makes demands on them that are often unrealistic. "System" was a key word for white female educators, who were very careful to avoid placing blame on specific individuals. People were reduced to the role that they play within higher education. As one educator states:

> Administrators see faculty time as a free resource. We are infinite, we can do an infinite amount of stuff and it never costs them anymore (Personal communication, March 8, 2010).

In this example, power dynamics are obscured by focusing on leadership as an abstraction, rather than as a reflection on how specific individuals chose to behave. The complexity of the individual administrator's choice to ask a lot from faculty is reduced to his or her "role" in the system; which, it is inferred, cannot change. The informant does not view "administrators" (or herself) as individuals who have the opportunity and choice to resolve issues of equity and social justice within their community.

Feeling powerless to change the system of higher education was a major theme for the white female educators who were invented.

Feeling powerless to change the system of higher education was a major theme for the white female educators who were interviewed. One participant commented, "I often think, here we are all smart, intellectually capable people who can't get it together. We can't create an institution of learning that doesn't rest on suffering" (personal communication, February 25, 2010). Another educator commented that:

> It just goes to show you that institutions over determine individual experience and individual agency. I am always teaching theories that say 'that's likely to happen!' Tomorrow I am teaching a class on Marxism and I know the students are all going to roll their eyes at some of Marx's ideas, but it is like he said we are not in control of the economy. He said that we are not in control of these institutions, and that they make us, we don't make them. You need look no further than the university to see how true that is (Personal communication, March 8, 2010).

Indeed, some of the women educators turned their objections about the system of higher education back on themselves, as if they have no individual "right" to disapprove of the demands their position necessitates. The same educator states:

> I still think it is crazy how much work academics have to do, and I feel at the same time ashamed of saying that because we have so much flexible time and in so many ways it is a privileged job. I just think people who don't do it, don't get it. It is incredibly demanding; it really is (Personal communication, March 8, 2010).

In this comment the faculty's understanding of privilege is internalized and used as a method to restrain her own concerns about the injustices and demands she experiences within higher education. Other educators positioned the system of higher education as deliberately separating the individual from inner peace and happiness. One professor who works at a public university commented:

> Higher education is a whole set of practices that leads us away from happiness. And it does so purposefully. If we fear not getting tenure, we are more likely to kowtow to the status quo. If we do not trust our colleagues, we are less likely to share our real feelings and thoughts regarding where the university is going (Personal communication, February 26, 2010).

In this comment of the faculty's understanding of privilege is internalized and used as a method to restrain her own concerns about the injustices and demands she experiences within higher education.

The focus on the system of higher education as being an immoveable problem, one that must be adapted to, was unique to the white females interviewed. One of the East Indian men interviewed stated:

> Academia is a worthy adversary of my yoga practice. I can see all the political stuff that goes on. My peers, very educated people, think the problems of higher education are abstract, that the problems are about the system. But it isn't, it is us and what we as individuals bring to the table. My colleagues say, "oh society and culture is doing this and that – there is nothing we can do." I think "no, this is a group of individuals, a group of ten people and we are all mean. Let's look at that. Let's look at what is happening right here!" But I would never say that. No. I think yoga helps me to see it, but what can I do? (Personal communication, January 31, 2010).

In this example, the individual's yoga practice assists the educator in having insight into himself and his peers as agents of authority; individuals with power. Simultaneously, unlike the women in this study, the men were not particularly interested in social justice or change. White women were the "ethical voice,"

who hoped to impact some change on themselves and their students through the integration of yoga as pedagogy.

Controlling Fear through Superiority

Fear was discussed in all of the interviews as an emotion that hinders clear thinking, but that was enacted in systems of higher education through competition, student reviews, and unclear promotion practices. As one philosophy teacher explained, "I do think that many junior academics are driven almost exclusively by fear, and those people tend to do very boring work" (personal communication, March 8, 2010). One of the primary fears expressed by white women educators was the fear of losing control, which manifested in a variety of comments throughout the interviews:

- Fear of not being understood by one's colleagues, and therefore losing some academic standing among their peers (4).
- Fear that the secular environment was being uprooted and that this needed to be controlled (3).
- Fear that they would lose control of the students (3).

Fear of loss of control was internalized by female educators as something they needed to "work on" and "ameliorate" so that they did not personally suffer. The stance towards fear was quite different for the white male educators who were interviewed; the men were largely concerned with a shift in culture that would result in a lessening of their social status and power. For example, one political science professor expressed that he felt many individuals were not willing to look at themselves and their culture authentically because they had fear of sharing their power. He stated, "So many of us fear that if we look truthfully at our own culture we will have to give up some of our power, or share it" (personal communication, February 25, 2010).

Fear was seen by female educators as something that students and administrators were not willing to face. One educator explained, "Freedom is a lot about confronting our fears not following a method - and most students, and people, aren't interested in that" (personal communication, March 8, 2010). In this statement the educator raises the issue that freedom results in uncertainty because when one is free they are not relying on institutions (educational, religious, et cetera) to define what is acceptable. Personal and ethical actions are kept in check through the strategic use of fear, which enhances the stability of the organizations the educators are participating in.

Fear was largely addressed by the white women in this study through a cultivated sense of superiority. Superiority was expressed as: thinking one's pedagogy was better (17); that one, as an educator, was better than the "system" (14), and that participating in yoga communities outside of higher education made one better (32). Superiority seemed to provide all participants with a conceptual framework from which to make decisions regarding pedagogical strategies, and provided a means to cope with the turbulent and competitive environment of higher education. Superiority was a quality that educators *hoped* their educational institute embodied, and that they, as educators, exuded. Superiority, was viewed by educators as a required and positive expression within higher education. Most participants found yoga to be of great value – an excellent and a possible extraordinary teaching tool (10). These individuals were enthusiastic about their ability to better meet their student needs (8). The educators articulated that their practice of yoga enabled them to experience conflict, while not being inwardly irritated by it (14). Yoga was seen as a superior, or truly excellent practice that had something to offer those who engaged it.

The negative and condescending "superior" attitude of Euro-Americans towards the people of the countries they colonize has been heavily discussed within academics (Fletcher, 2016; Liou, 2018; Said, 1993, 1994). Superiority has the negative connotations that the person who holds this attitude exhibits distain for others,

or a certain unwarranted conceit. This value was expressed by only two of the female participants, who practiced modern postural yoga and felt that their choice to integrate embodied practices into their classes expressed a pedagogical risk that their peers and supervisors were unwilling to take due to their own intellectual monotony (2). Instead, superiority was articulated by most participants in terms of the discipline of yoga being a better, more reliable way to learn about one's self (12). The essential theme was that a life oriented around the inner strength bestowed by yoga was superior as it was a panacea for the hectic and beleaguered life of academia.

DISCUSSION

Educator John Dewey saw democracy as an ethical system by which a society used critical thinking to determine which values, ideas and practices would be integrated into the larger culture (Dewey, 1944). The educators who participated in this study were in a dynamic relationship with yoga's cultural legacy, as well as with the psychological legacy of colonialism. The classroom became a space of authenticity, where the faculty's private life is unveiled and where the classroom reflects the contrasts, repetitions, history, dialogue and heart that is central to all pedagogies concerned with social justice. As yoga is adapted by faculty from Euro-American cultures, it is repositioned as a balm to heal some of impacts of our colonialist ways of knowing.

The colonialist tendency to take what one wants from a culture and leave what one is not attracted to is reflected in this study. When yoga is stripped of its historical and philosophical context, it initially appears as a simple expression of Euro-America's colonialist desire to remain, essentially, unchanged. Postcolonial scholar Richard King argues that, "academic scholarship often occludes the role of tradition and continuity in the production of scholarly knowledge" because of the "post-Enlightenment myth of the autonomous individual and the fetishistic obsession with innovation within the marketplace" (King, 2002, p. 4). White women educators using yoga as pedagogy were primarily interested in the "tradition" of yoga as a practice with the potential to make them, and their students, better adapted to the competitive constraints of higher education. Yoga, as pedagogy, became an "innovation within the marketplace" of higher education that allowed faculty to feel better, and to cope with a system that, in the end, continues to demand too much.

The colonialist tendency to take what one wants from a culture and leave what one is not attracted to is reflected in this study.

White female educators genuinely wrestled with, and hoped to make positive changes to what they felt was an unjust system. These individuals hoped that the integration of yoga as pedagogy would heal the characteristics of feeling powerless to change the system, lack of trust, and fear of loss of control; while also creating the stability and superiority that they valued. Yet, superiority, even in its most benign forms, unknowingly breeds a lack of trust as "others" never feel quite good enough, as if they are always less then, and must work harder to catch up. Superiority also encourages the colonialist characteristic of dualistic thinking as it implies a series of comparative relationships: likes/dislikes, better/worse, right/wrong, us/them, educators/administrators. Educators cannot have superiority without dualistic thinking and lack of trust. Additionally, while stability was a valued quality that educators hoped to replicate, the balance of maintaining stability, while also demanding to change the system of higher education was problematic. When the desire for stability is higher than the desire to change the system, it breed a sense of powerlessness (things "have" to be as they are). In all likelihood things do not have to be as they are, rather changing the "system" of higher education is a risk - the change agent is unlikely to know where she stands, or to lose status within the existing power structure.

While it may appear that superiority and the need for stability are universal characteristics, it may be that superiority and the search for stability appear to be universal due to the opacity of our own culture. Educators could consider cultivating two yogic qualities in their place: humility and the recognition of the illusion of stability. Humility, or the quality of being modest, is seen in yogic literature as the hallmark of a truly learned individual (Krishnananda, 2009). From a yogic perspective, humility, not superiority, is the natural outgrowth of knowledge. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, *vidya* (knowledge) and *vinaya* (humility) are viewed as natural partners that grow together, and complement each other (Chidbhavananda, 2005). Humility emerges from knowledge because as one learns, one becomes aware of all that they do not know, and of the limitations of their own capacity for knowledge. It is the acknowledgement of what one does not know that impels the individual to desire collaboration, which enhances trust. It is also humility, or the acknowledgement of the limitations of one's own knowledge, that causes a learner to instinctively recognize that dualities are cognitive constructs as it is impossible that there are *only* two ways to view a given situation.

The desire for stability is discussed in the *Taittreya Upanishads* (a yogic text) as being rooted in an unconscious fear of death (Sankaracharya, Suresvaracharya, & Vidyaranya, 1993). This fear is avoided in three fundamental and predictable ways: endless attention to the body, dulling of the senses, or an attempt to grasp and control the minute details of life (Krishnananda, 2009). From a yogic perspective, educators in this study could be seen as having a preference for "control" as a way to reconcile that the human experience is indeed unstable, fragile, and finite. Acknowledging the reality of life's instability, may allow the individual to pin their fear of loss of control on the underlining reason for their distress: the individual's powerlessness to change the ultimate reality of constant change. The instability of life is a reality that when freely acknowledged may allow the educator to recognize the truth, that they cannot control the process of life. While they may not be able to change the reality of constant change, they may be able to create modest changes within higher education to reflect the social justice they seek.

The *Upanishads* teach that every individual is entangled with suffering; recognition of one's frail human state is often the impetus to live a quieter life, to engage in mindfulness, or other spiritual practices in an effort to "get rid" of suffering. According to the *Upanishads,* this effort is all too often usurped by a long to-do list that supports the idea that we, our physical presence, our academic and educational prowess is wanted. How do we, as individuals, escape this nagging yearning for satisfaction, and recognition? The *Upanishads* share that it is the human attempt to "get rid" of suffering that is false. We cannot toss our suffering aside. We must care for and attempt to understand the suffering which comes to us (Douglass, 2009). For educators using yoga as pedagogy, there was suffering in the attempt to push aside the feelings of powerlessness to change the system, the fear of loss of control, lack of trust and dualistic thinking; yet these characteristics did not attenuate through the integration of yoga in their classrooms. The characteristics these educators have pushed aside are guides to understanding the impact of colonialism on our ways of knowing; they are invitations to rethink our way of being, learning and teaching in the world.

Since the time of *The Vedas* humans have been asking themselves how we can have self-knowledge and knowledge of the world; how individuals can determine the proper path of knowledge, and the way of "truth." The answer to which paths generate knowledge and how we can best come to know, becomes more complicated as educators attempt to give consideration to the complex amalgam of traditions, ideas, and methods of knowing that exist within the world. As educators include pedagogical choices that are different than the Euro-American view, this inclusion will occasionally challenge beliefs about where knowledge is situated, and how it is obtained.

The desire to bring yoga as pedagogy into higher education needs to invite dialogue with the multiple perspectives that seek to define yoga, including those individuals who practice yoga within a religious context (whether of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christian, or other tradition). Dialogue has potential to expand educator's thinking about pedagogy, and to invite a public exploration of the limitations and strengths of

integrating yoga as pedagogy. Dialogue is needed not so much because educators are incorporating yoga "incorrectly" or "out of context," but because they are incorporating these practices, in part, to revive their own relationship to pedagogy and to teaching. We, as educators, need to understand more deeply and with more clarity from what we are reviving.

What educators in this study most desired was a return to the significance of teaching. The educators valued what they did as teachers, and wanted to instill in their students a great love and passion for learning. They wanted their students to be "engaged" in learning as opposed to "getting" a degree. They wanted students to challenge ideas, create new knowledge and learn to think critically about the nature of epistemology and pedagogy. Since Paulo Freire's classic publication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2006), many educators have stressed the significance of student-centered teaching that challenges the way in which education replicates injustice (Freire, 2001; Giroux, Lankshear, McLaren, & Peters, 1996; hooks, 1994, 2000; Horton & Freire, 1990; Leistyna, 1999; Palmer et al., 1999). Using yoga as pedagogy asks us to revision pedagogy as more than teacher-focused or student-focused. Yoga as pedagogy asks us to redefine learning as a process of collaboration between expert and novice, between communities of practice. Yoga as pedagogy entices us to see knowledge as a co-construction that relies on all of our strengths.

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