Decolonizing Yoga in Academia: Narratives of Young Adults using Yoga to Manage Stress

Abstract
This inquiry explores the experiences of thirteen Canadian yoga-exemplars, ages 25-40, who use traditional Yoga knowledge and practices to handle life's stresses and strains. The young adults describe Yoga as a holistic and spiritual practice as a way of life, a philosophy, and not merely a physical exercise. Their stories about how they cope with the challenges of life such as school, relationships or existential angst, demonstrate how Yoga has helped them effectively cope with stress. Their discussion of Yoga is important because of concerns that unmanaged stress leads to negative impacts, such as anxiety, depression and drug and alcohol abuse.

Researchers have concluded that, due to the heterogeneity of Yoga, it is difficult to compare Yoga programs to know their quality or content. Also, these programs are usually limited to practice of asanas, or physical postures, along with some mindfulness. Yet, as the Patanjali Yoga Sutras explain, Yoga teaches the complete psychology of the mind and provides a holistic, spirituality-based, embodied and experiential approach to wellness and increased self-awareness. Using the Art of Living programs as a case study, this inquiry provides an example of a program that teaches all eight limbs of Yoga which is a Yoga-based theoretical framework researchers can use to study programs that are based on Yoga.

Purva paksh, or critical review, of western scholarship on Yoga has led Indigenous scholar-practitioners to conclude that Yoga has been, and continues to be, studied through colonial lenses. This study proposes and demonstrates how Yoga may be better understood and analysed using Yogas own theories and Sanskrit terminology.

This study uses decolonizing methodologies to theorize Yoga as indigenous knowledge, similar to other indigenous knowledges of the world which are based on the oral tradition. Indigenous scholars have asserted that the authority to speak for or teach the knowledge belongs to its own knowledge keepers and scholars, and not to outsiders. The study further decolonizes western studies on Yoga to show that the significant contributions made by Yoga to western psychology, mind sciences, and philosophy remain mostly unacknowledged. A review of the many threats faced by Yoga from western Indology provides the backdrop to the yoga-exemplars’ narratives.
Five ways you can decolonize your yoga practice and get in touch with the real roots of yoga. One powerful way we can decolonize yoga and reunite it with its true aim and purpose is to practice Gandhian svadhyaya, or self-rule and inquiry, and to truly learn the full honest, integrity of an authentic yoga practice. 

2. Explore, learn and cite correct cultural references. As practitioners of yoga I would love to see more of us citing cultural references as we attempt to understand and connect with the complexity, culture and history from which this tradition comes. Yoga Therapy is the use of yoga postures, meditation and pranayama to help the body naturally heal and balance itself. Check out our Yoga Therapy section to learn which yogic practices have been shown to have healing qualities for common complaints. Yoga Therapy Guides. Monthly yoga giveaway! Each month YogaBasics’s readers can enter a new giveaway for a chance to win a great yoga prize. Previous prizes have included yoga books, clothes, and yoga festival tickets! Enter This Month's Giveaway! Our Premium Membership. 

Women Practicing Yoga During Menstruation Yoga for Easing Menstrual Discomfort (Sequence 35) Practicing Yoga During and After Pregnancy Yoga Sequences by Stage of Pregnancy Yoga in the First Trimester of Pregnancy—New to Yoga (Sequence 36) Yoga in the First Trimester of Pregnancy—Healthy and Experienced Yogini (Sequence 37) Yoga in the Second Trimester of Pregnancy—New to Yoga (Sequence 38) Yoga in the Second Trimester of Pregnancy—Healthy and Experienced Yogini (Sequence 39) Yoga in the Third Trimester of Pregnancy—New to Yoga (Sequence 40) Yoga in the Third Trimester of Pregnancy—Healthy an