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Yoga as Work: Good Work? Bad Work?
Emotional Labor, Aesthetic Labor, and Managing Stereotypes

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by

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Abstract

This qualitative research explored the work experiences of twenty-two yoga teachers through in-depth interviews in two different cities. Participants gave insight into their work experiences, their performance of emotional and aesthetic labor, and how they perceive, manage, and navigate the stereotypes associated with yoga culture. Participants reported work conditions that involved low wages and a lack of traditional benefits. The performance of emotional labor was generally perceived as a personally fulfilling aspect of work. It was suggested that the aesthetic labor yoga instructors perform imposes fewer body-type restrictions than other physically-oriented occupations. The stereotypes associated with yoga were acknowledged by all participants, however few agreed with them. Most participants suggested that yoga is for everybody. Disregarding the work conditions of yoga instructors, many reported that instructing yoga is an emotionally fulfilling occupation.

Dedication

This project is dedicated to my father, Eric Liss. I am so thrilled I have made it to the finish line, and I could not have gotten here without his undying support. At the times I wanted to quit, I always heard his voice in the back of my mind encouraging me to keep pushing forward. Everything I've learned about perseverance, dedication, and the importance of education, I learned from my father and for that I am eternally grateful.

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Introduction

Despite the rapid growth of the yoga industry and increased sociological interest in studying yoga as a leisure and cultural phenomenon (Smith & Atenia 2017; Kishida, Mama, Larkey & Elvasky 2017, 2016 Yoga in America Study), the work conditions and experiences of yoga instructors are not fully understood. The work of a yoga instructor is a complex and sociologically fascinating profession. For example, despite (supposedly) offering flexibility and personal fulfillment, the work of being a yoga instructor is reportedly not highly paid (Yoga in America Study 2016; Goldberg 2015).

In addition, the American yoga industry is often perceived as highly gendered, racialized, and classed, such that those interested in yoga, as either instructors or students, are presumed to be wealthy, thin, white women (Brooks 2018). These stereotypes persist despite recent evidence that they are inaccurate (Brooks 2018, Haddix 2016, Velaquez 2016, & Carter-Ford 2016). For example, Jessamyn Stanley, a fat and black yoga instructor has captured the attention of the public through her posting photos of her yoga practice online (Stanley 2013); Stanley has since authored a book and been featured in national advertising campaigns.

These facts motivate sociological questions, such as: to what extent does the work of a yoga instructor reflect or reinforce stereotypes and/or inequalities tied to gender, class, race, and embodiment? Given that the work is reportedly not highly paid, should the work of a yoga instructor be considered a “good job” (Kalleberg 2011) or is it a “bad job” obscured by its association with a glamourized classed, racialized, and gendered leisure culture? To what extent does the work of a yoga instructor require emotional labor and/or aesthetic labor? Finally, how do yoga instructors, themselves, understand their

work experiences? In light of these questions, the purpose of this study is to more deeply understand the work experiences of yoga instructors, in their own words. This study will contribute to the sociological literatures on gendered work and aesthetic labor.

Theoretical Background

Below I outline the literatures that inform this study. First, I discuss sociology of work, focusing specifically on the theoretical concept of aesthetic labor, and I then provide background on America's yoga culture.

Gender, Work, and the Body

In the sociology of work, there are several dimensions that determine whether a particular job might be considered good work or bad work. Economic compensation, benefits, job security, control over work, and the extent to which work comes home are all factors that influence job quality (Kalleberg 2011:5). As a consequence of shifting away from manufacturing economies, all industrial nations have experienced a growth in the service sector. The pattern in the U.S. has involved less government intervention in the labor market (Kalleberg 2011:28). This has resulted in fewer labor regulations, which has allowed poorer working conditions to flourish, particularly in certain types of jobs.

Two types of workers that sociologists have identified as being especially vulnerable to unstable work conditions include those employed in the service industry, and also workers who are independent contractors. Yoga instructors typically fit into both categories, as independent contractors working within a service industry. Forty-seven percent of yoga instructors work as independent contractors with 29% of instructors consider teaching yoga as their primary source of income (Yoga in America Study 2016). Given that many yoga instructors appear to work under less-than-ideal conditions, this

study seeks to understand both the motivations for this work and the consequences of it. Because yoga instructors often rely on their physical appearance and abilities, much of what they do may be conceptualized as aesthetic labor. Below, I outline the research on “aesthetic labor” which helps situate the work of yoga instructors within the existing literatures on gender, bodies, and work.

The concept of “aesthetic labor” emerged from Hochschild’s (1983) concept of emotional labor, as well as Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. Emotional labor refers to the work that is required to maintain the proper mood while working, and the work it takes to manage the emotions of clients. Bourdieu’s (1984) concept of habitus refers to mannerisms that are embodied, which we acquire from our classed upbringing. The concept of aesthetic labor borrows from both Hochschild and Bourdieu in that workers are required to not just manage emotions but also their bodies and embodied mannerisms. Employers seek out potential employees with the “right” habitus, which can perpetuate inequality. For example, Williams & Connell (2010) found the “right” habitus for retail workers in mainstream clothing stores to embody is nearly always white, conventionally attractive and middle class, characteristics that are also associated with yoga practitioners.

Emotional labor and aesthetic labor are not typically listed in any formal job requirements and the extent to which one performs emotional or aesthetic labor on the job depends on the nature of their work. It has been argued that “emotional labor is a missing link in the chain of events that produces lower wages for jobs held primarily by women” (Guy & Newman 2004:296). Considering 66% of yoga practitioners agree that a warm and friendly demeanor is (part of) what makes a yoga instructor good (Yoga in America

Study 2016) and given that yoga studio owners often use referrals from friends and other yoga instructors to hire new instructors (Yoga in America Study 2016), it is likely that successful yoga instructors are performing significant amounts of emotional labor.

Much of the work published on aesthetic labor focuses on service industries involving retail workers (Warhurst & Nickson 2001; Gruys 2012; Williams & Connell 2010) and fashion/beauty workers (Mears & Finlay 2005; Mears 2008; Holla 2015). For example, many female models must manage their body capital, as well as put in emotional labor to please potential client or agencies (Mears & Finlay 2005). Bodily capital isn't about acquiring an ideally normative body, but rather the kind of body that garners value in a specific field. While a model's body capital depends largely on thinness, that standard does not translate to every profession.

Considering yoga, like modeling, is inherently physical, the managing of body capital and emotional labor can be conceptualized as a type of aesthetic labor. The work of a yoga instructor involves both physically moving the body and verbally conveying messages to students. While some yoga instructors teach primarily fitness-based yoga classes, others teach classes focused primarily on emotional and/or spiritual outcomes. The extent to which yoga instructors perform emotional labor likely depends both on individual characteristics as well as the context in which they are teaching. For example, there are instructors based in chain gyms, high end boutique spas, and in public schools, and each setting likely requires different kinds of emotional and aesthetic labor.

While workers in many service industries are now required to perform aesthetic labor, certain occupations—such as fashion models and employees in plus-size clothing stores—are increasingly expected to have certain body types (Gruys 2012; Williams &

Connell 2010). Indeed, Williams and Connell (2010) find that employers are seeking specific people who can be seen as “looking good and sounding right,” principles found in many workplaces nowadays. But, looking good and sounding right depends on the brand image or culture and specific context. As Gruys (2012) found in her study of a plus-size clothing store, both customers and employees engaged in “fat talk” (talking about body fat, often framing losing body fat as a positive experience) and was very much integrated into the day-to-day routines of the store, despite the brand priding itself on being a “safe space” for plus-size women. Going against brand values, the underlying assumption that larger employees want to lose weight and that larger customers need to lose weight aligned with mainstream values. This illustrates that a “safe space” isn’t necessarily free of mainstream judgements and ideals held by employees. It also exemplifies how brand values and workplace cultures can align and/or conflict with mainstream cultural values. Musial (2016) found that Orthorexia (an obsession with the quality of food one eats, such as vegetarianism, veganism, gluten free or sugar free diets), was integrated into the culture of yoga spaces. The way yoga spaces talk about food/eating patterns, may have larger health and classed implications for those that frequent those yoga spaces.

Research on “aesthetic labor” may help explain why some workers accept less favorable employment conditions in exchange for status. For example, Williams and Connell (2010) found that retail workers in high status retail stores consent to poorly paid jobs because the jobs align with their interests as consumers more than their interests as workers. In other words, economic compensation is not always the deciding factor for workers when selecting work. Because yoga is associated with high-status characteristics

in terms of race, class, embodiment, and culture, yoga instructors may willingly accept poorer working conditions in exchange for the social status that accompanies their work.

The work of yoga instructors, like work in other aesthetically oriented occupations (such as models or retail salespeople) may be shaped by clients' aesthetic expectations or goals. Much like shoppers may prefer to receive clothing advice from attractive and trendy sales associates (Williams & Connell 2010), yoga students may want to feel inspired by the bodies of their yoga instructors. Hutson's (2013) work on relationships and expectations amongst personal trainers and clients has clear similarities with yoga instructors. While personal trainers are not physical therapists or nutritionists -- they often take up space in a grey area outside of, yet within, health work. Hutson found that clients have expectations of what their trainers should look like, and that trainers acknowledge they must embody their work. Trainers' bodies prove to clients their knowledge of fitness and their willpower to live a healthy lifestyle. In many ways, trainers' body capital reinforces their authority (Hutson 2013). In other words, yoga clients and hiring managers may assume that certain yoga instructors will be better or more popular if they embody these expectations.

Stereotypes, Diversity, and Inclusion in Yoga

Most academic writing on yoga and inequality acknowledges that Western yoga culture is highly classed, and racialized, and gendered such that yoga is often presumed to be reserved for wealthy white (thin, traditionally feminine) women only. Below I outline the extant literature connecting yoga with these intersecting (Crenshaw 1997; Hill Collins 1989) categories of identity and oppression, focusing first on class, and then race, body size, and gender/sexuality, in that order.

Yoga studios are highly classed spaces (Muscial 2016 & Page 2016). For example, Musial's (2016) work examining yoga spaces & orthorexia (an obsession with the quality of food one eats), further illustrates the existence of classed assumptions about what is required to maintain health, such as the value of doing a juice or fruit cleanse (requiring access to ample produce and/or expensive pre-made juices]. Page (2016) examined a yoga studio Seattle that configured class/caste barriers into their fee structure; this particular studio charged more to students that can afford a higher fee, so that poorer students in the area can afford to access classes. This case sheds light on how the expensive leisure culture of yoga studios leaves many unable to participate, as well as the importance of intentional interventions.

Yoga spaces in the U.S. are overwhelmingly white (Page 2016), and spaces that are predominantly filled with white yoga instructors and white yoga practitioners, are not always welcoming to black and brown bodies (Brooks 2018 & Haddix-Brooks 2016). Within the black community, there is often an assumption that white yoga instructors are not comfortable working with black bodies, particularly big black bodies (Brooks 2018); this assumption and the desire to provide black communities with yoga is a motivation for some people of color to become yoga teachers (Haddix-Black 2016). Brooks (2018) specifically explored the experiences of black yoga instructors in North Carolina, examining how the black yogis manage the stereotypes associated with yoga (such as the idea that it is for wealthy white women) and how they navigate yoga spaces that are created to cater to the stereotypes. Brooks found awareness of the aesthetic stereotype of the small white woman instructor, yet nearly all of Brooks' participants mentioned Jessamyn Stanley (mentioned in the introduction of this paper) as being an important

yogi in terms of breaking boundaries and stereotypes in the western yoga world. When larger bodied people, especially people of color, transition from practitioners to instructors, hyper-invisibility transforms to hypervisibility (Dark 2016). However, Brooks argues that there is great value in yoga instructors' diversity and diverging from the stereotypical norm (Brooks 2018; Haddix-Brooks 2016; Dark 2016), suggesting that the hypervisibility of yoga instructors that defy the yoga stereotype is desirable.

Surprisingly, academic research explicitly focused on yoga and gender and/or yoga and sexuality is difficult to find. For example, I was unable to find any studies that specifically looked at the experiences of men involved in yoga, and only found a few fleeting references to the experiences of queer people involved in yoga (i.e., Blaire 2016). That said, the existing research, itself, by focusing predominantly on the experiences of women, itself illustrates the pervasive assumption that yoga, at least in the Western context, is for women, particularly women who are white, privileged, and traditionally feminine. This project addresses some of these gaps in the literature.

Background: America's Yoga Industry, Culture, and Mainstream Representations

Yoga, translated to English, means union. Yoga has transformed itself from a sacred practice from India, into a substantial part of the health & wellness economies and culture in the U.S. There are small independently owned yoga studios from big cities to small towns as well as brands such as Lululemon, which is publicly traded within the NASDAQ. Like Lululemon, yoga has become commercialized. Yoga in mainstream advertisements exhibit that yoga is used to "promote profit, not wellness" (Blaine 2016:137). In popular culture, yoga is commonly used to reinforce gender normative

stereotypes (often women being objectified for the pleasure of men), thus capitalist/consumerist culture often distorts the true purpose of yoga (Blaine 2016). Despite what is portrayed in popular culture, yogis of color are present on blogging websites; sharing their practices, perspectives, and solidarity with one another (Velazquez 2016).

Yoga is broadly seen as a positive activity for physical and mental health (2016 Yoga in America Study). In a study conducted by Trent, Miraglia, Dusek, Pasalis, & Khalasa (2018) it was found that integrating yoga into the lives of frontline professionals (health care providers, educators, human services, and corrections) improved participants mindfulness, stress, and sleep. Yoga practitioners view yoga as beneficial (Smith & Atenia 2017), claiming that yoga increases calmness, mindfulness, self-compassion, and connectedness (Kishida et. al. 2017). Yoga has a positive effect on individuals living with chronic pain (Tul, Unruh, & Dick 2011) can play a positive role in those recovering from eating disorders (McIvera, O'Halloran & McGartland 2009 & Varej, Fyfe-Johnson, Breuner & Brown 2010), and reduces stress in pregnant women (Satyapriya, Nagendra, Nagarathna & Padmalatha 2008). Yoga instructors are thought to positively impact their communities at rates surpassing the general population. Twenty-eight percent of the general public tries to donate time to their community while 54% of yoga instructor do (2016 Yoga in America Study). Yoga instructors are also eating local and sustainable foods at higher rates than the general population (2016 Yoga in America Study). There are classed implications in considering yoga instructors are people who are eating healthy and using their leisure time to both practice yoga and volunteer. However, the potential of yoga to improve quality of life for people, as well as yoga instructors' tendencies

consciously treat their communities with respect, are cultural and social components of yoga worth noting.

The last several decades there has been a shift in the U.S. economy, as the economy has shifted from manufacturing, into a more service based economy (Kalleberg 2011). The service sector ranges from food servers, bartenders, retail works, and anyone providing a service to patrons, particularly when the service is provided face-to-face. Yoga instructors should be understood as service workers because they are workers whose service is providing clients with a yoga class. The number of people pursuing careers in yoga is expanding rapidly, as for every one yoga instructor, there are two future instructors that are currently in training (2016 Yoga in America Study). The market for teaching is becoming increasingly competitive (Goldberg 2017). While about one third of yoga teachers say yoga is their primary income, another third claim yoga is their side gig, and the final third of teachers say it's a hobby, or avocation, which makes them feel good (2016 Yoga in America Study). Most yoga instructors are not working what most jobs consider full time hours; 2% of instructors work 41 or more hours a week, 5% of instructors work 31 to 40 hours a week, 8% of instructors work 21 to 30 hours a week, 19% of instructors work 11 to 20 hours a week, 30% of instructors work 5 to 10 hours a week, and 37% of instructors work fewer than 5 hours a week (2016 Yoga in America Study).

Yoga classes are offered in a variety of contexts, including in chain fitness gyms and on exotic destination retreats. Yoga is integrated into mainstream culture, fashion, and health & wellness markets. Yoga instructors are trained to lead yoga classes that typically range from one hour to 90 minutes. There are many institutions to get trained

through, so the instruction styles vary amongst yoga instructors in the U.S. All yoga instructors use their voices to give instruction. Many yoga instructors model the poses for their classes, some instructors make “adjustments” on their students, which means that they touch their students to help guide them into correct poses. Additionally, many instructors create intentions for their classes, which means they provide a theme for their students to focus on throughout the class. Some yoga instructors focus on teaching their students to breathe, focus, and meditate. Some yoga instructors focus on teaching their students asanas, or physical postures.

Research Questions

These literatures and background motivate important sociological questions, such as: to what extent does the work of a yoga instructor reflect or reinforce stereotypes and/or inequalities tied to gender, class, race, and embodiment? Given that the work is reportedly not highly paid, should the work of a yoga instructor be considered a “good job” (Kalleberg 2011) or is it a “bad job,” obscured by its association with a glamorized classed, racialized, and gendered leisure culture? To what extent does the work of a yoga instructor require emotional labor and/or aesthetic labor? Finally, how do yoga instructors, themselves, understand their work experiences? In light of these questions, the purpose of this study is to more deeply understand the work experiences of yoga instructors, in their own words.

Method

This study examined the work experiences of yoga instructors through in-depth interviews. To more fully understand the quality of work and the extent to which teaching yoga is a good job or a bad job, in-depth interviews with yoga teachers provided rich and detailed data. The richness that is needed to answer the questions of inquiry cannot be collected via a questionnaire. In-depth interviews are time consuming, however to paint the picture of what modern yoga teachers do for work will take time to collect. Twenty-two yoga teachers participated in this study, 10 based in Reno, NV and 12 based in Las Vegas, NV. My sample includes both men and women who are yoga instructors as well as racial/ethnic diversity. Interviewees were recruited through flyers posted at yoga studios in both cities, and through snowball sampling via my personal connections as a yoga teacher to recruit participants. Participation was voluntary, and participants were provided with informed consent.

Interviews began with a few casual questions to establish rapport, and then moved on to more pointed questions about participants' work experiences as yoga teachers (e.g., "What is your rate of pay per class?"), as well as their personal thoughts and experiences regarding yoga and stereotypes (e.g., "Some people think that yoga is a good way to change how your body looks. What do you think?"). Finally, participants were asked if there is anything else they'd like to share. Interviews took place in participants' homes, yoga studios, and office spaces. The interview protocol can be found in the methodological appendix. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Analysis

Transcriptions of interviews were analyzed and coded using Dedoose, a qualitative data analysis software program. Data analysis followed the approach outlined by Deterding & Waters (2018) in their recent article “Flexible Coding of In-Depth Interviews: A Twenty-first-century Approach.” This approach provided techniques allowing for data to be coded in way in which future researchers will be able to pick up this research and continue to work with it. Deterding & Waters (2018) were able to point out how messy many modern qualitative researchers are when working with their data. Many of the conveniences provided by qualitative data analytical software (ability to highlight text, create codes, add sticky notes), have led to a non-uniform method of code creation and data analysis. Deterding & Waters (2018) provided clear coding steps instruction as suggestions to researchers working with qualitative data, as follows:

“Generally, our first step can be thought of as data exploration and preparation. It involves indexing the transcripts, anchoring content to the interview protocol. During this phase, the researcher will also produce respondent-level and cross-case memos, beginning to document the analytic process by developing hypothesized relationships between concepts. In stage 2, the researcher will use the index for data reduction, applying analytic codes to focused sections of the transcript, prioritizing reliability and validity of the coding. Analytic codes represent the concepts we explore in a single paper or book chapter and integrate emergent findings with what is known from the literature. In stage 3, the researcher will use the

software's tools for conceptual validation, model building, and the testing and refining of the data-based theory." (Deterding & Waters 2018: 15)

Thus, following the above outlined steps, I first read through every transcript several times in order to familiarize myself with the data. After doing this, I used the qualitative data analysis program Dedoose, to "index" the transcripts based on my interview protocol. In other words, I created broad codes based on my interview questions, and then linked interviewees' responses to these questions, in whole passages. Indexing based on the interview protocol allowed for me to clearly look at all of the data for individual questions, which facilitated a more streamlined creation of analytic codes. Because there was enough data collected to write more than one potential paper, I reviewed pertinent literature to determine the most productive thematic direction my thesis should take. After determining which indexed data would be most pertinent to this analysis, I created analytic sub-codes in Dedoose, which can be found in Table 3.

Positionality and Study Limitations

Because I work as a yoga teacher and practitioner, I am already integrated into the yoga community through my own experiences. There are certain cultural norms, jargon, and aspects of the bureaucratic organization of yoga studios that I was aware of heading into this research, which may have improved my ability to connect with and build trust with my interviewees. On the other hand, my own experiences as a yoga instructor who is a young, white, middle-class, and slender woman, may have caused me to have biased assumptions about the work of yoga instructors. To protect against my own biases, I created an interview protocol that was as open-ended as possible to allow my interviewees as the ultimate experts in their own experiences. I also conducted

preliminary interviews and reviewed their transcripts to assess whether my interview protocol was working as intended, and ultimately changed the wording of several questions so that they did not reify my own experiences or language. Finally, the development of my coding scheme, as described above and as shown in in Table 3, was designed to minimize bias and subjectivity through not only the development of emergent themes, but also by tracking frequencies of each theme. Measuring the frequency of themes and codes helps hold researchers accountable for neither over-estimating nor under-estimating the prevalence of social phenomena. Nevertheless, drawing from feminist standpoint theory (Collins 1989), it is unavoidable that my positionality allowed me to see certain things other researchers might have missed, while missing things that other researchers might have seen.

FINDINGS

Good Jobs, Bad Jobs, Pay and Benefits

The ways in which yoga teachers are paid varies. Sixteen participants (84%) reported being employed as independent contractors while 6 (27%) reported being paid as employees. Nine participants (47%) reported being paid per class, 6 (32%) reported being paid per student, and 7 participants (37%) reported being paid per class with additional bonuses available per student. The lowest reported pay rate was \$16 per class at a local yoga studio, while the highest reported rate was \$100 per class at a drug rehab facility. Ten participants (48%) reported that their work as a yoga instructor was their primary source of work income, while 11 participants (52%) claimed yoga is not their primary source of work and/or income (one participant did not answer this question). Of the 4 participants that both teach and also own or operated a yoga business, only two paid

themselves, while the other two reported that they did not generate any income from their endeavors.

In addition to being paid for their teaching, however poorly, all of the respondents reported that they received additional perks, though only two had access to benefits. The most consistent perk reported by 100% of participants was free studio or gym access for themselves and/or a guest. Twenty-seven percent of participants noted additional perks, such as such as discounts on merchandise sold at their studio and/or at affiliated local businesses. However, more traditional workers benefits, such as health insurance, paid sick leave, or retirement benefits were exceedingly rare. As Talia (white, 43) explained, “Just free access. No other health or medical savings benefits.” When asked about benefits in addition to pay, Kevin (white, 24) similarly said “Definitely free gym and other studio access. Uh. I didn't get health benefits or anything from the yoga I was teaching.” Bringing up discounts, Isabella (white, 45) explained, “I get big discounts in the pro shop. I get big discounts on special classes and that kind of stuff, so there are some non-monetary or non-salary benefits.”

Only two participants had access to either a retirement plan or paid sick leave. Notably these participants were employed to teach yoga outside of the context of a traditional yoga studio setting. Thus, Isabella (white, 45) explained that she pays into a retirement plan tied to teaching yoga through a community college: “ I do have [benefits] through the community college, I do pay into a retirement plan, which given that I only teach a couple of credits for them, it's not a lot, but that is still there.” Derek (multi-racial, 46) received paid sick days through one of the gyms he worked at. He was critical of the fact that his situation was so rare:

I wish they would be a lot more comprehensive with sick pay. Uh, well, I don't get sick, but for a lot of the other instructors, sickness and injury are a part of it. So I think that having the instructors build up sick time as they work, so that when they do have an injury or something, they're able to take a few days off and not lose pay is a good thing. I would encourage them to be a lot more active in that space because, like I said, in this business [there are] injuries and also we interact a lot with the public, so illness and stuff happens.

The lack of consistent benefits that yoga instructors are receiving, suggests that this line of work lacks fundamental qualities that are generally associated with good work.

Of the 19 respondents that answered questions about their perception of the fairness of their pay, 12 participants (63%) felt fairly compensated for their work, while eight (40%) did not. Of the participants who felt fairly compensated, none were business owners. Derek (multi-racial, 46), noted that he felt “fairly paid” in relation to his experience, or “for my skill set and how long I've doing it.” Alexander (white, 30) reported that he felt like he was paid fairly specifically because he had negotiated his rates. Robert (white, 67), described himself as having a different approach to compensation over the years, explaining, “In the beginning, I was like, ‘I'll just take a class anywhere to get the experience.’ But now that I've been doing it a while, I feel like I'm being compensated with what I'm worth.” Like Alexander, Robert spoke of negotiating, explaining, “when you start believing you're worth more, you'll probably get more.” In some cases, pay was deemed as fair due to having low expectations. Thus, Hillary (white 22) said, “I don't have huge expectations on what I'm gonna receive for

teaching yoga. I don't think it needs to be that much. (laughs).” Negotiation and low expectations are two ways of reframing low pay in ways that help the worker feel as though they have some control or choice in the situation, which may make them more likely to accept low wages.

Seven participants (37% of the 19 who responded) reported not feeling fairly compensated for their work. Notably, the participants who reported not feeling fairly compensated tended to be the more experienced, with an average of 4.3 years of experience compared to 3.2 years of experience among the participants who felt fairly compensated. This may reflect frustrations that increased experience does not lead to increased pay. Maggie (white 35), who prided herself in “always trying to improve and learn, and doing different things whether that’s training, or reading, or workshops,” observed that “some places don't take into account your experience ... or how you're staying educated or learning, [compared to] other teachers.” Erika (white, 59), the most experienced teacher in this study with 18 years of experience, felt that her pay rate was unfair, but justified her continued work in yoga by framing it as a gift, saying, “my value is way more than I get, but I don't focus on the monetary value for myself. I never have done that and I don't think I ever will. It's a gift I'm willing to give openly and honestly to people that need it. So, that's where my focus is,” (emphasis added). Derek (multiracial, 46), similarly de-emphasized the “job” aspect of being a yoga instructor:

I love it. Um, it's not a job for me. Like I said, I would do it [...] if they didn't pay me. For me, if you can touch people and help them find a little more happiness, a little more peace, and a little more self-confidence [...] to free themselves from self-incrimination or self- deprivation, you know,

where they just [have] self-acceptance, that's what it is, [and] that's great 'cause every time you see them, you can see [them] standing a little taller. Whether it's in yoga or anything in life, if you can do that, then it changes the world in a way 'cause it's a butterfly effect. Everybody they interact with, they have a better experience, then from there and there and there, and who knows where it goes?

Framing their work as a generous “gift” or a calling, rather than as an occupation may satisfy individual yoga instructors in terms of their sense of purpose and identity, but this logic also makes them vulnerable to poorer pay and/or work conditions.

Zen (white, 24) was able to articulate this tension, noting that their class privilege allowed them to work as a yoga instructor “because it’s what I love,”:

I think a lot of people get into being a yoga teacher because they love the yoga, not for that to be their career. 'Cause if this was gonna be someone's only job I don't think it would be very sustainable. I just don't think it's very profitable, you know? I'm in a position where I can support myself without this job, so I can just sort of focus on the job because it's what I love. I don't need benefits like that 'cause I can afford them myself, but [...] it couldn't be my only job if I needed to support myself.

Carmen (Arab, 36), suggested that approaching the work of yoga instruction as a gift or “act of service,” is more likely among women instructors, and therefore has consequences for gendered inequalities in pay and/or benefits:

I think what happens is, as yoga teachers, we have this feeling that we're doing the yoga as an act of service and that we don't really, necessarily, need

to or feel like it's important to ask for more money or to be compensated at a higher amount. First of all, that diminishes the value of the work that we're offering because then people think, like, "Oh, well then all yoga teachers don't really need to get paid that much. Since they're doing this as an act of service, we can just kind of like pretend that they're doing it for charity." And then, I think, even more so with women. I feel like we have, as women, a general fear of asking for more money or demanding our worth. It's something that, as women, we struggle with more than men do. So, I think that translates to men getting paid more, but I don't think it's because they're men. I think it's because they're asking for it.

While the notion that “sharing yoga is a gift” was common throughout several interviews, these findings suggest that yoga instructors’ propensity to see their work as meaningful, perhaps helps keep them active in this creative field. While not all yoga instructors look at their work critically, the ones that did, identified flaws within the current yoga market.

Motivations, Meanings, and Logics for Entering Yoga as a Profession (and for Sticking with It)

Participants’ motivations for becoming a yoga instructor were coded and categorized as being based on economic factors and/or personal fulfillment. Interestingly, only 18% of the participants in this study began their teacher training because they were motivated to by economic factors, and when participants did describe economic motivations, they tended to describe perks rather than broader financial stability. For example, Talia (white, 43) explained that she became an instructor primarily for a free membership at the yoga studio in which she was practicing as a client:

I decided in 2005 that I wanted to become a yoga teacher, not because I wanted to teach, but because I thought if I went through the training, then I would have yoga with me no matter where I went in this world. [...] I figured I could get a free membership like for a year at this place, from going through their training

Kevin (white, 24) was similarly motivated by perks, noting that the person who trained him gave him a “full ride scholarship” for the training: “I just had to like show up early and set everything up and tear down and then just like help her with little things here and there. I was just kind of the worker guy. But yeah. She totally gave it to me for free.” This suggests that the expanding yoga industry is not full of instructors that are focused on the potential for substantial economic gains.

Thirty-six percent of the participants in this study began their teacher training because they were motivated to achieve a form of personal fulfillment or growth. For example, Joy (white, 22) explained that she became a yoga instructor in part to overcome a fear of public speaking: “I used to have a fear of speaking in front of people, and big large groups would scare me, and I'd get extremely nervous in classroom settings [...] So, I did it because I didn't think I could do it, and I ended up finding out I was pretty good at it.” Winona (white, 27) similarly expressed pride in her decision to become an instructor, describing her training as a “huge life-changing, intense thing.” Winona's experience entailed traveling to India, being provided with healthy meals in a program that ran from 6AM-7PM, the whole experience left her feeling transformed and very ready to teach yoga. Winona was one of 3 participants to travel abroad for their teacher training (two participants traveled to India, one to Nicaragua), and several others mentioned traveling

to different cities within the U.S. This suggests yoga teacher trainings can also be understood as a leisure activity, at least for privileged instructors, as many would argue traveling thousands of miles to get trained and taking extended periods away from paid work for personal fulfillment, is only accessible to privileged people.

Related to the theme of seeking personal fulfillment, an additional 27% of participants explained that they began their yoga instructor training in response to major life transitions, such as job loss, moving to a new city, and/or changes in a romantic relationship. Victor (white 30), for example, quit his job in New York and “gave up everything to move to Vegas,” where he earned his certification to teach yoga. Maggie (white 35) decided to go from being a yoga student to a yoga instructor in the wake of losing both a job and a relationship:

About six months after I started practicing [as a client], I got fired from my corporate job that I thought I was gonna be at for the rest of my life. And then six months after that [...] the guy that I thought I was gonna marry broke up with me just out of the blue. [...] I had been practicing [yoga] for a while, and it was definitely therapeutic. And like with the relationship ending, and being fired, I ended up moving home with my parents, because I didn't really know what else I wanted. I needed to take a pause, like take a big breath, and take some space [...] like, "Well, what do I want to do?" And so I, um, registered or applied for teacher training.

As a third example, Ursula (white, age N/A) decided to attend teacher training as a way to transition back into the work force after being a stay-at-home-mom for two years, wondering “well, what can I offer? I’ve just been home, not really doing much except for

yoga and being a mom.” Ursula was not even certain that she wanted to become an instructor, but her husband encouraged her:

My husband was like, "Well yeah, you've practiced yoga every day. Why not incorporate that somehow or use that experience to get a job?" And I was like, "Well yeah, you're right. Maybe I should just become a yoga teacher." I went into a teacher training and not really with the intention of being a teacher, but just to see how I would react to it, and maybe it would deepen my practice, or maybe I'd find out that I didn't really want to be a teacher. But I ended up really liking it and meeting a lot of cool people and decided that this is the right path for me.

It is again evident that especially amongst white women that participated, privilege propelled them into their training. Without supportive family units, leisure time, and funds to participate in a training, perhaps these participants would not have entered the work of teaching yoga.

In light of these findings, it is not surprising that when asked to consider the best aspects of teaching yoga, most participants (19, or 86%) credit personal fulfillment being the best aspect, while not a single respondent mentioned pay, perks, or benefits as the best aspect of their work. Forms of personal fulfillment ranged from helping people to actively participating in their yoga community. The theme of helping people, a sub-code of personal fulfillment, was mentioned by half of all participants and 58% of those discussing personal fulfillment. For example, participants cited interacting with people and “improving their lives” (Isabella, white, 45) and “being able to see people’s transformations” and watching them “do things in their practice that they never thought

was possible,” (Carmen, Arab, 36). In a quintessential response, Hillary (white, 22) romantically explained that “showing people where they’re stuck in their patterns, in their ways, and showing people that they have everything they need to unstick themselves [is], like, the greatest service and purpose you could be on this Earth for.”

Personal fulfillment was so valued by the interviewees, that when asked to describe the worst aspect of their jobs, 11 participants (50%) described times when they felt a lack of personal fulfillment as marking a low point in their work. In particular, feeling unable to help other people was mentioned by 6 participants (27%). For example, Georgia (white 26), who felt that she was “not very strong in anatomy” reported feeling badly if students asked questions about anatomy when she didn’t “have the knowledge or background to give them real advice.” Lily (Eurasian 25) mentioned the difficulty of unintentionally triggering students dealing with trauma during class: “Another thing that’s a little bit difficult is when, let’s say something that you did in class triggered a student with something emotionally that they are going through.” Yoga instructors not being able to fulfill the wants and needs of their students is a downfall that leads them feeling less than, these findings suggests these are consequences of working with people’s bodies and emotions.

Another sub-code of personal-fulfillment was self-fulfillment, a theme mentioned by 13 participants (59% of all participants, and 68% of those who mentioned personal-fulfillment). Derek (multiracial, 46), for example, described “getting to connect with people” as the best thing about his work as a yoga instructor, and noted a symbiotic relationship between his students’ growth and his own, “finance [as a career] is binary. It's asymmetrical. Somebody wins. Somebody loses. In yoga I build relationships with

my students and as they grow, I grow, and as I grow, they grow. They get better. I'm able to do more with them as I get better. They're able to do more with me. So, we are always going in the same direction and I love that.” Samuel (white, 26), was able to laugh at himself while admitting that being admired for being yoga instructor fed his ego:

Samuel: Um, (chuckles), well my first thought goes to my egotistical brain.

When I tell people I'm a teacher you get this kind of, like, glow. People, in their eyes, [are] like, “Oh my God. You're a yoga teacher.”

Interviewer: So you enjoy the status side of it?

Samuel: I enjoy the status a little, because people, like, they look at you differently when they see that you [are a yogi...]. [...] So they look at you immediately like, um, not a prophet, but they're just like, “Wow this person is woke,” you know?

Interestingly, Samuel was the only interviewee who spoke explicitly about status in this way, a finding that differs from the literature on retail service workers (i.e., Williams and Connell 2010; Walters 2016).

Although three participants (14%) listed aspects of their work conditions as being the best part of their jobs – including “working barefoot,” (Talia, white, 43) and feeling “freedom of time” due to being able to choose when and how often to work (Alexander, white, 30) – a much higher number of participants (11, or 50%) listed work conditions as the worst aspect of their jobs. Talia (white, 43), for example hated “the business side of it, as a contractor, where you have to be responsible for your own insurance and your healthcare and stuff like that.” Joy (white 22) noted that “the pay is really bad (laughs) anywhere you go, which is sad” and Erika (white 59) laughed as she said “well, if you're

in it to make money you might want to find another profession.” In a more serious tone, Carmen, (Arab, 36) advised:

In order to make yoga as a job successful, you have to be really creative and think outside the studio box. I think studios are a great place to start in order to build confidence as a new teacher. They're a great place to create community for yourself and for your business, but there needs to be a larger picture in terms of how you're gonna make money to sustain yourself as a teacher because working at a studio is not a sustainable job.

Nina (white 68) simply advised, “If I was your age and I was looking at getting a job full-time, no, it wouldn't be yoga.”

Despite frustrations and challenges, when asked at the end of the interviews whether they believed that being a yoga instructor was a good or bad job, the majority (58%) of participants responded in the positive. The findings described in this section suggest that the work of being a yoga instructor – including motivations to start the job as well as motivations to stick with it – is tied to workers’ emotional satisfaction and identity, rather than because it affords status or because it’s a “good job” by traditional metrics, such as pay and benefits.

The Emotional and Aesthetic Labor of Being A Yoga Instructor

The extent to which being a yoga instructor requires emotional and aesthetic labor is an important aspect of the work experience. All of the participants were expected to perform emotional and aesthetic labor as a part of their work; in addition to teaching students how to correctly move and position their bodies while cultivating particular types of environments and ambiance during their yoga classes, participants were expected

to interact with students before and after class. Most participants enjoyed this aspect of their work, meaning that this particular aspect of emotional labor was perceived, for the most part, as a positive experience. Of the 18 participants who spoke about their interactions with students either before or after class, 17 (94%) reported spending time talking to their students during these times.

Although most respondents described their pre- and post-class interactions with students a positive aspect of their jobs, they also acknowledged that it took effort, such as Ophelia (white, 26), who explained, “I try to. Yeah. Sometimes it's hard because I have my manager's brain turned on, and I'm focused on emails, voicemails, things like that. But I try to get out of that and talk to students and see how they're feeling.” However, not all participants enjoyed talking with their students, including Samuel (white 26), who explained “I just don't [enjoy it]. They come up and approach me and talk to me, absolutely, [but] it's not something I go out of my way to do. When I'm here to teach, I'm here to teach.” Notably, the specific topics that students/clients wanted to talk about before and after class influenced the extent to which these interactions required more or less emotional labor. In addition, expectations for aesthetic labor were often implied when students engaged in negative or fat-shaming body talk.

Participants in this study report working with students that spoke to them frequently about body image issues, eating disorders, and weight loss. These finding suggests that pressure to engage in fat talk, or negative body talk more broadly, which previous scholars have identified as a form of emotional labor (Gruys 2012), is a part of the job for many yoga instructors. For example, 17 participants (77%) recalled working with students who wanted to discuss weight loss, 14 participants (64%) recalled working

with students who wanted to discuss body image concerns, and 8 participants (36%) recalled working with students who specifically wanted to discuss eating disorders. Winona (white, 27), for example, noted that many of her students had explicitly expressed a desire that their yoga practice would lead to weight loss. Joy (white, 22) mentioned that students didn't necessarily explicitly say that they wanted to lose weight, but "it's been more, like, people coming to me after a few months of being in my classes, and they're like, 'This is amazing! Look what's happening!'" in reference to having lost weight.

Interviewees who had dealt with students desiring weight loss or bringing up issues about body image generally felt sympathy for their students and wanted to be body-positive or at least body-neutral. Derek (multiracial, 46), for example, bemoaned that his clients feel "too flabby here, too weak there, too much fat here. It's a real eye opening. I wish every guy would get the opportunity to hear their spouses and moms talking about all of these things that they feel bad about, because it sucks." Carmen (Arab, 36), felt a responsibility for helping her clients work through their body image issues, an endeavor going above and beyond the yoga instructor job description:

I teach them to re-focus on breathing and feeling [...] It's a matter of re-focus. It's a matter of changing perspective. So, if they're obsessed with their butt being too big or too small or whatever, it's just, "how do we change that perspective?" or getting down to, like, "Why? Why do you think your butt is too big or too small?" Or, "What would happen if your butt was different?" (laughs) And then finding out, like, what is the root cause? Because, usually, it has nothing to do with their butt. Usually, it's just some

underlying insecurity, something that's much more deeply rooted. So, through this type of asking them questions, you can kind of get down to the root issue, and that's when the real fun begins.

These findings suggest that engaging in “fat talk” with clients – which previous scholars have identified as a form of emotional labor (Gruys 2012) – is a relatively common aspect of the work of being a yoga instructor.

Participants additionally reported feeling varying levels of pressure regarding how their own bodies looked, in terms of body shape and size. Of the 19 participants who were asked explicitly about whether they felt pressure to look a certain way, the majority (15 participants, or 79%) claimed that teaching yoga did not make them feel pressured to have a certain body type, while 4 participants (21%) claimed that teaching yoga did make them feel pressured to have a certain body type. Hillary (white, 22), for example, said, “No. It [yoga] makes me empowered to do my own practice, which requires using my body, but doesn't change the way I think my body should look.” Nina (white, 68) noted that her feelings about her body size and shape had changed with age, saying, “No. It's because of my age that I say that. When I was younger, if I even breathed, I was feeling like, “Ugh, no, I'm too fat,” you know? [But] when you're 68 that's gone. It's history.” Kevin (white 24), however, spoke openly about feeling pressure to be “lean and thin,” explaining:

Yeah. At some points when I was teaching, I felt like I should be like entirely lean and thin, and not even have a lot of muscle mass if I had some stockiness or whatever. I felt like people might trust me more if they saw someone that could, like, fit that body type. I'm a guy and I think a lot of

guys, especially in the west, their hips are just like very closed, so if I couldn't do some of these other poses to their full extension I didn't think people would trust me with a practice or something 'cause I hadn't gotten to that point [of full extension].

Derek additionally noted that certain yoga studios require certain looks, recalling a time when he had auditioned at “the very high end gym in town”: “I remember walking out with my friends who auditioned, and I said, “A, they didn't hire me 'cause I don't look the part. But B, uh, I don't think I would have done it.” Kevin’s and Derik’s narratives illustrate that body-image concerns impact male yoga instructors, a population and topic that that has thus far been understudied in the literature.

Participants were also asked how they felt about their bodies while teaching, including whether or not they were concerned about the way their body looked while they taught. Of the 15 participants that were asked whether or not they felt concerned about how their bodies looked while they taught, 10 (66%) reported not feeling concerned about how their bodies looked, while 5 (33%) reported that they did feel concerned about how their body looked. Of the respondents who reported not feeling concerned about their appearance at work, Georgia’s response was typical: “I'm pretty happy with my body, so it's just not something that is, like, an active concern, you know?” Those who did report feeling concerned about their looks while teaching included Samuel (white, 26) who chuckled while explaining, “I don't focus on [my appearance] But, yeah, I'll be teaching and I'm in a pose and I'll catch myself looking at myself in the mirror, making sure I have it right, or if the pose looks good.” Although Samuel’s experience of body-consciousness seemed relatively positive or at least ambivalent, most respondents

depicted their concerns about their looks as a negative thing they wanted to overcome. Piper (white, 43), for example, acknowledged occasionally feeling negatively about her body while teaching, but worked to challenge those thoughts:

Even when I'm feeling like fat or whatever, bloated, out of my normal self, it's that little nagging voice that comes into your head and is like, 'Oh my God, my pants are fitting so tight. I really hate it. Oh my God, I don't want to do anything.' I just feel like going backwards and sulking inwards and it's like, "F that. That's so stupid. Accept yourself where you are.

Maggie (white, 35) who reported feeling pretty good about her body presently, but that in the past she “didn’t always,” recalling, “How it showed up for me is that I never wanted to be in front of class. I always taught from the back. I wanted to be not seen.” Maggie further described reframing and accepting her critical thoughts through mindfulness:

I think it's okay to feel insecure. I think, like, it's a feeling like any other feeling. It's the same as feeling happy. It's the same as feeling sad. It's gonna come up and I think it's just important to not feel too stuck to it and not avoid it either. So, just like any other feeling, experience it, move forward.

Piper and Maggie’s experiences suggest that, although being a yoga instructor can increase pressure to have a certain body type or look, that the practice of yoga, itself, can also lead to greater body acceptance or at least developing tools for managing negative body-image.

MANAGING YOGA STEREOTYPES: IDENTITY & RESISTANCE

Yoga & Gender, Race, Class, Age, Embodied Stereotypes

Every participant was aware of stereotypes regarding what kind of person practices yoga, generally agreeing that the stereotype of the “typical” or “ideal” yoga practitioner is a thin, white, privileged, women (a few respondents also added bodily flexibility and wearing expensive athletic attire to the list). The majority of these respondents (16, or 72%) explicitly claimed that the stereotype was a misconception, although 12 (55%) did acknowledge inequalities in terms of access. Six respondents (27%) specifically brought up the importance of yoga instructors working to challenge and combat the stereotypes.

Ursula (white, no age given), said "I think it [the stereotype] kind of ruins yoga for people. Yoga should be for everyone. When people hear that, ‘oh it's just for rich white women,’ or whatever, they might get discouraged and not want to try it. So, that does bother me.” Hillary (white, 22) asserted, “you know, yoga can be literally for anyone” and that “anyone that gets deep enough into this practice they see that it has nothing to do with gender.” Acknowledging the stereotype while challenging its validity, Piper (white, 43) noted “I don’t believe [the stereotype], but I think it’s very dominant.”

The stereotype most commonly addressed was related to gender, and the fact that yoga culture in the west is feminized. Sixteen of the respondents were asked to recall if they had ever observed a male client discuss breaking gender norms through yoga, and of these, 81% (13) participants confirmed that they had, indeed, heard at least one male client bring this up. Typically, respondents described a man, or men, who initially believed that yoga was for women, or that it was “sissy stuff,” who then realized that yoga is, in fact, physically challenging, and therefore in line with masculinity. For example, Nina (white, 68) remarked that “Once in a while the older men will come in

with his wife and he'll say, like, "Ugh, I'm in because of her." They almost seem like, "Oh this is sissy stuff." [But] no, it's not." Alexander (white, 30), similarly said, "Okay, so I've never actually had [a man] say that they were breaking a stereotype by doing the yoga. I've had them come in and definitely say like, 'Oh is this for women? Oh, this is like, a non-manly thing.'" Alexander continued by saying, "it's like, [men] look at it [yoga] and they're very like, 'Oh, that's for women,'" until they try it and then they realize, like "oh, it's hard!" Hillary (white 22), remarked that yoga requires "a balance of masculine and feminine," but that "all of the strength that's included in yoga [...] is masculine and empowering on that level."

Despite framing yoga as "for everyone" and insisting that it is not, or at least should not, be gendered, 6 respondents (40% of those who discussed masculinity in yoga), noted that men who practice yoga tend to be less-traditional in terms of their masculinity. Zen (white 24), who identifies as non-binary in terms of gender, for example, said the following:

I don't know about the sort of trans[gender] demographic about this, but the cis[gender] dudes who do yoga tend to be so much more, well, less of the toxic masculinity. [...] yes, they're still very much masculine, they're still very much men, but they're so much more open and emotional. And I think that was probably really important for me, you know? With like, "Oh, I can still be a yoga teacher. That doesn't make me feminine. But also I can be, like, open with my emotions and that doesn't make me less masculine.

Ophelia (white, 26) went so far as to suggest that participating in yoga could cause otherwise macho men to become more in touch with their feelings, whether they desired

this or not. “Men can't cry. They can't feel feelings. They just have to be strong and build their muscles. And yoga does build up your muscles, but it's [also] gonna break that [emotional] barrier too, and everyone cries during yoga at some point. So, (laughs), it will happen.” Although participants were all aware of the gendered stereotypes associated with yoga, many offered meaningful ways to challenge those norms.

Noting issues of unequal access to yoga, Isabella (white, 45) agreed that, “Because yoga is an industry, you know, mainstream yoga is most accessible to privileged, slender, white women.” Speaking more specifically about racial/ethnic stereotypes, Brittney (black, 36) noted that, “as a black women, I do find when I go into a yoga space, that I look to see if there's other people that look like me.” Piper (white,), admitted:

I never used to give it a thought, but I did my training with a friend of mine and she's African-American. She's black. And she opened my eyes to how much the black community does not have a space where they feel accepted. And I never viewed that before because in my head, I'm like, "Yeah, everybody, everybody ... It's fine. Everybody come in." [but] the more I go out, the less of the black community I see. And I think that's an actual real issue, so people do [believe the] stereotype [because] that's what you tend to see a lot in the studios.

Brittney and Piper's acknowledgement that their own yoga classes typically lack racial diversity is an important step, going beyond simply proclaiming that “yoga is for everyone,” despite clear inequalities in access.

When asked about body shape and size, 6 participants (29%) claimed that being too fat could be a problem when it comes to a person's ability to teach yoga, while 16 claimed that larger body size doesn't matter or could even be a strength. Those who felt that fatness could be a problem tended to frame their logic around the idea that a fat body would be less able to perform physically. For example, Winona (white 27) said "I mean, if you can't do some of the poses, then it's a little harder." Derek (multiracial, 46) qualified his answer, saying "I would suppose that there is a size, a large enough size, where it would become an issue. But that size is much larger than people would think." Erika (white, 59) emphasized her belief that being a successful yoga instructor is not based on a person's embodied traits, but rather on their personality and "essence":

Some people think "Well if I could just do a handstand I could be a yoga teacher or if I could just lose 30 pounds I could be a yoga teacher." But that has nothing to do with that. It's the essence of who you are that you share with people and they love that. They love you.

Although no respondents specifically identified as being fat, several argued that yoga instructors with fat bodies should be viewed as a form of valuable diversity and representation. Emphasizing the value of both challenging stereotypes and being relatable to clients, Maggie (white 35) said:

I don't really think [body size] has a whole lot to do with it. I've talked about this before. I think it's super important to have diverse teachers of diverse size, of diverse abilities, because their struggles and our struggles are so relatable. I think they know how to, like, walk people through things better

because they too have struggled. So I actually think, like, if they have something going on that's not the stereotypical stuff, it's even better.

Brittney (black, 36) additionally said:

Body size or shape? I don't think it [matters] at all. I think it's an emotional thing. So if they feel uncomfortable in their body, no matter whether they're skinny, fat, tall, short, if you're uncomfortable in your body, then that's going to impact your ability to teach yoga. But no matter what shape, size, color you are, if you're confident and know what you have to offer. Because, I mean, no matter who we are, there's someone who's similar to us, that we can impact. You know? Or someone who wants to be like us, or someone who was us at some point. We have impact, no matter what we look like.

These data suggest that there may be acceptance of greater body diversity for yoga instructors, compared to the personal trainers described by Hutson (2013). That said, given that none of the yoga instructors in this sample were actually fat, it is also possible that the participants were mostly giving lip-service to this idea.

Six participants (32%) specifically brought up the importance of yoga instructors working to challenge the stereotypes. Reflecting on her commitment to racial diversity in yoga, Brittney, explained “I really am passionate about [this], and actually I’m going to be putting on a workshop for black women, because I want to see more women of color feeling comfortable and breaking that [stereotype] of white, rich women.” Derek decided to challenge stereotypes and issues of access by refusing to work at a gym that wasn’t diverse. After auditioning for a job at the most expensive gym in town, Derek decided:

I made the decision when I left that I don't think I can teach there because the people who are going there that were gonna pay 150 dollars to be in that gym. [...] I like a more diverse class. Not a very small subset of a subset of a subset of a subset of a population.

Maggie (white, 35) expressed a strong desire for changing the perception that yoga is only for privileged, able-bodied, white women, while also questioning how she might bring about change as a privileged, able-bodied white woman:

I think it's important that things change. And I think a lot about, like, "how can I start changing that?" But then I also think, like, I'm a white woman. I mean, I'm not skinny nor very rich. I mean, I'm middle class. I could afford [to go to yoga classes] if I wasn't teaching. I'm very privileged, and I feel like probably 80% of the clientele is privileged, and white, and female. They may not be rich, but they have money [...] and free time... Or I don't know if free time or they maybe just prioritize things a bit differently. Um, but I think it's important to really start changing that dynamic and especially for white women, thinking about, like, how can we, um, start changing that conversation? Because I always feel like a bit of guilt or shame [about my] privilege, like, "Oh well, yeah and this white woman that's teaching yoga." And I kinda feel a little guilt about it, like, it would be awesome to have more women of color or people with different abilities ...

Interestingly, when it was pointed out to Maggie that she had previously described herself as a "short, like, kind of overweight person" she admitted that she

challenged the stereotype “just a tiny bit” but still insisted “I feel like I should be an ally and not the voice.”

Some participants, such as Brittney and Derek, above, noted that they challenged these stereotypes simply by their presence as yoga instructors, due to their own identities and personal characteristics. For example, Zen (white, 24), a non-binary, asexual, autistic person, agreed that their body “challenged mainstream yoga culture,” Zen described experiencing tension between wanting to be a good yoga instructor who prioritizes the needs of students while also “creating a more trans-inclusive world,”:

I went to a college and was very involved in the activism scene, so I was surrounded by queer people and people who have similar backgrounds to me, and, like, never got my pronouns wrong or anything. And then I went to working in [the yoga] world that's a lot more white, a lot more heteronormative, a lot more cis-normative, um, a little bit [of an] older demographic. My co-workers have been great. I approached them right away about they/them pronouns and they have all been very receptive. My co-workers never mis-gender me anymore, really. It's just the students. It's not my job to educate every single student about me, 'cause it's my job to educate them about the yoga. If I make it about me then it's not about them, and my job as a yoga teacher is to make it about them, you know? It's difficult. I try to just remind myself that it's not my job to educate them [about being transgender]. It's just my job to be a teacher and help them with their yoga practice. It's a lot of just, like, gritting my teeth and getting through it, you know? It does bother me when I get mis-gendered, but, [...]

at the end of the day I can't make this about me. Even though on the other hand I'm, you know, trying to create a more trans-inclusive world. I'm kind of like, "I should speak up." But, at the same time it's like, baby steps, you know? [...] Talk about emotional labor. If I were gonna give these people all of my nurturing and my time and also be like, "Also, let me tell you about cis normativity and the trans experience." You know, that's just too much. I can't. (laughs)

Zen's experience navigating an extremely heteronormative workspace gives insight into the challenges of being a queer yoga instructor. That said, without more queer participants it is difficult to make any generalizations about the queer experience.

Interestingly, Zen reported a more positive and inclusive experience in terms of their autism:

I've learned that I can be more unapologetically autistic. I've actually gotten to the point where I can, like, flap my hands in front of students and they don't look at me weird. You know? Which is so rare. [...] I don't look at people when they talk sometimes 'cause, like, I can't focus and I can't do that. And I've never gotten a comment about that. You know? No one's ever said anything. So, I'm like, "These people really do let me be autistic." And that helps, because having the confidence to just be myself makes me better able to teach.

Zen's experience being an autistic yoga teacher gives insight to how inclusive, unique, and supportive yoga studios can be for people on the spectrum, although, again, with only

one autistic participant it is difficult to make any generalizations about the experiences of yoga instructors who are not neurotypical.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This qualitative research study explored the work experiences of 22 yoga instructors in both Reno, NV and Las Vegas, NV. Participants shared their work experiences and gave narrative and insight into the emotional and aesthetic labor required of yoga instructors. Participants additionally provided insight into the gender, race/ethnicity, class, and embodied inequalities that are pervasive in western yoga culture, offering some routes for social change.

Whether or not being a yoga instructor is a good job or a bad job is highly subjective. Despite most instructors in this study feeling fairly compensated, these participants largely work as independent contractors without benefits. The work of a yoga teacher is relatively insecure in the current yoga market, however the emotional satisfaction and identity work that yoga instructors associate with their employment helps explain why they persist in what many sociologists would consider to be a “bad job.” Although meaning and personal fulfillment should not be dismissed as unimportant (indeed, jobs that have neither of these things are also “bad”), but sociologists studying this type of work should be wary of the consequences of these tradeoffs.

Yoga teachers, like other professionals, embody their work (Huston 2013), while also executing field specific forms of emotional and aesthetic labor. While some professions have stringent expectations as to how workers must manage their body capital (Mears & Finlay 2005 & Williams & Connell 2010), yoga culture appears to accept more diverse forms of bodily capital. In terms of evaluating emotional labor, most

participants viewed this aspect of their work positively, as an aspect of the personal fulfillment described above, and most participants didn't critically consider whether or not they were being fairly compensated for this work. The performance of aesthetic labor had more variety in whether it was perceived as positive or negative. While some yoga instructors admitted to feeling concerned about the way their body looks while teaching, others said they were not aware of their body while teaching. Casual conversations, partaking in body talk, managing one's own physical body, and managing other's bodies are all job specific forms of aesthetic and emotional labor that yoga instructors perform.

Many of the findings I drew about the specific forms of aesthetic labor yoga instructors perform (or fail to perform) need to be put in full context. Many of my participants reported not feeling pressured to have a certain type of body, as well as not feeling concerned about the way body looks while they're teaching. The majority of the participants in this study were small bodied, or lean or muscular, individuals. Only two of the participants in this study were not skinny. As white people are often not conscious of race because their race often does not create problems for them, slim yoga instructors may often not be conscious of sizeism or fatphobia, because their body size does not create problems for them. This is highly embodied work, and hegemony amongst participants' bodies may have impacted these findings.

Yoga instructors that participated in this study were well-aware of the stereotypes that exist in the industry. When confronted with the stereotypes, instructors had three general responses: there are misconceptions about yoga, there is inequality in access to yoga, and there is importance in breaking the stereotypes associated with yoga. Participants almost universally agreed that "yoga is for everyone" (or at least should be),

and that there should be diversity in who teaches yoga. However, only a minority of the participants discussed feeling personal responsibility for creating social change on this level, suggesting a gap between the lip-service paid to diversity compared to instructors' willingness to create change. It may be unreasonable and unrealistic to expect that tackling issues of diversity and inclusion should fall on the shoulders of yoga instructors, given their low pay, lack of benefits, and already high amounts of emotional and aesthetic labor. However, the fact that participants who were racial/ethnic and/or sexual minorities seemed to be more actively working in this realm, while more privileged white women instructors seemed to be mostly paying lip-service is a pattern that may reify inequalities among yoga instructors.

One of the central questions of research was to determine whether or not yoga instructors have a good job or a bad job. In retrospect, it is clear that is dichotomy is false as there are many good aspects and bad aspects of the job. This particular work is too complex to determine whether it just good, or just bad. When considering several participants described their role in helping people transform their lives as compensating for low pay, it becomes clear framing the work in terms of both the opportunities it affords and the constraints it imposes is more accurate than reducing it to either good or bad.

The performance of emotional labor appears to intersect with gender, as the only participant that admitted to participating in general chit-chat before class was a male participant. Based off of the work available on black women & yoga (Brooks 2018; Ford 2016 and Page 2016) and this research, white women appear to be more likely to experience positive interactions and experiences with yoga spaces. It should be noted that

how non-cisgender individuals and sexual minorities navigate non-queer yoga spaces is an area of intersectionality deserves further exploration. The one non-binary participant in this study expressed frustrations with needing to be a caring yoga teacher, while having students struggle to correctly gender them. There is still room for more intersectional analysis of yoga as a profession, as a business, and as a cultural institution.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This research has several theoretical implications. It is a contribution to the existing literature on emotional and aesthetic labor. It gives insight into the gendered, racialized, and classed work experiences of many people that are operating as freelancers in the current yoga economy. This research challenges the notion that workers often accept bad working conditions in exchange for status (Williams & Connel 2010), and sheds light on how the emotional labor required of yoga instructors is sometimes seen as a positive aspect of the job. How people in this industry challenge and reinforce stereotypes should be further explored, as should the experiences of men in this field.

This research has several practical implications for the yoga industry. While a lot of yoga is taught through small businesses, and health insurance in the U.S. is not set up for the benefit of small businesses, it would be unfair to say it is small business owners' responsibility to initiate meaningful change. This research should catch the attention of corporate yoga institutions (for example, Bikram or CorePower), and encourage these institutions to start extending a living wage and benefits to their teachers. Considering the influx of money that is being spent in the yoga economy, it would be ideal to see more of that income directly benefiting the instructors who are putting in the physical and emotional work.

Table 1. Sample Description (N = 22)

Characteristics	N	Percentages
Gender		
Woman	15	68.2%
Man	6	27.3%
Non-Binary	1	4.5%
Race/Ethnicity		
Non-Hispanic White	18	81.8%
Arab	1	4.5%
Black	1	4.5%
Other	2	9.1%
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	17	77.3%
LGBTQIA+	5	22.7%
Age		
Mean		35.9
Standard Deviation		14.4
Job Title		
Yoga Instructor	18	81.8%
Yoga Instructor and Business Owner	4	18.2%
Employment Status		
Independent Contractor	16	72.7%
Employee	6	27.3%
Other	1	4.5%
Pay per Class		
Mean Minimum Pay Range		23.97
Standard Deviation		15.41
Mean Maximum Pay Range		42.5
Standard Deviation		29.8

^aDue to rounding, percentages do not always add up to 100.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics by Participant

Name	Gender	Race / Ethnicity	Sexual Orientation	Age	Years Teaching	Employee or I. Contractor	Pay Per Class	Classes/ Week
Alexander	M	white	hetero	30	3	IC & E	\$50-\$120	11
Brittney	W	black	hetero	36	4	IC	\$30	1
Carmen*	W	Arab	hetero	36	13	IC	\$0	2
Derek	M	"Mixed"	hetero	46	2.5	IC & E	\$22-\$35	15
Erika	W	white	hetero	59	18	IC	\$20-\$60	5
Georgia	W	white	hetero	26	4	IC	\$20-\$30	1
Hillary	W	white	"open"	22	2	-	\$20-\$30	None
Isabella	W	white	hetero	45	14	IC & E	\$25-\$70	12
Joy*	W	white	hetero	22	4	IC	\$0	None
Kevin	M	white	hetero	24	1	-	\$25-\$35	None
Zen	NB	white	asexual	24	9m	E	\$35-\$40	6-12
Lily	W	Eurasian	hetero	25	2	IC	\$37.50	2
Maggie	W	white	hetero	35	6	IC & E	\$30-\$50	6-8
Nina	W	white	hetero	68	1	IC	\$20-\$30	6-10
Ophelia	W	white	bisexual	26	2.5	E	\$60	7
Piper	W	white	hetero	43	10m	IC	\$16-\$30	2
Robert	M	white	hetero	67	1	IC	\$20-\$100	5-6
Samuel	M	white	gay	26	2	IC	\$30	3
Talia *	W	white	hetero	43	13	K1	\$0	4
Ursula	W	white	hetero	?	2m	IC	\$0- \$20	6
Victor	M	white	pansexual	30	10m	IC	-	-
Winona*	W	white	hetero	27	2	-	-	2-4

* Denotes business owner who also teaches classes.

Table 3. Code Definitions, Examples, and Frequencies

Code	Definition	Example Quotes	Frequency of Theme n (%)
YOGA AS WORK			
Independent Contractor (N=22)	Interviewee sharing learning experiences of being an independent contractor.		
Autonomy over work	An episode in which an interviewee mentions control over their work.	Victor: Now, I'm being more selective and I want to feel good about it. It's not so much, I just want to teach, now that I've had some experience under my belt, I want to be in situations that feel really good for me to.	8 36.36%
Taxes	An episode in which an interviewee mentions taxes.	Ophelia: I would say biggest thing is remember to put money aside for taxes.	9 40.91%
Write Offs	An episode in which an interviewee mentions write offs.	Georgia: The- the other bonus is, uh, because I do get paid to teach yoga, I get to write off a lot of stuff. Um, when I do my taxes at the end of the year, I, uh, get to write off all of the yoga classes I've taken at other places, anything that's yoga-related training, all the yoga books, all the yoga material, uh, travel and my Spotify, like, account- Interviewer: (laughs) Georgia: can all be written off my taxes. (laughs) So-	3 13.64%
Business License	An episode in which an interviewee mentions having a business license.	Ursula: I'm working on getting a business license so that I can contract myself out anywhere I want to go.	2 9.09%
Lack of Time Off	An episode in which an interviewee mentions not having time off.	Isabella: The other ... Let's see. I think the other thing is the fact that I don't have time off. If I don't work, I don't get paid.	2 9.09%
N/A Employee	An episode in which an interviewee works as an employee, not an independent contractor.	Zen: I don't think I technically am. I'm an employee of Juicebox Yoga.	2 9.09%
No	An episode in which an interviewee mentions not having any experiences to share in regards to being an independent contractor.	Nina: Hmm. Experiences I would say, no.	2 9.09%

Benefits (N = 22)	An episode in which an interviewee describes their benefits as an employee.		
Free Studio/Gym Access for self or guest	An episode in which an interviewee mentions free access of facilities as a benefit.	Zen: I have unlimited access to the studio. Yeah.	22 100%
Other	An episode in which an interviewee describes benefit outside of studio access.	Derek: I do receive sick pay, um, from one of the gyms.	7 31.82%
Fairness of Perks or Benefits (N=15)	An episode in which an interviewee describes whether or not their benefits are fair.		15
Benefits & Perks not fair	An episode in which an interviewee describes benefit as not being fair.	Derek: I do think that, um, I wish they would be a lot more comprehensive with sick pay. Um-interviewer: me about that. What do you mean? Derek: Uh, well, I, I don't get sick, but a lot of the other instructors, sickness and injury are a part of it. Um, so, I, I think that, uh, having the instructors build up time, uh, sick time over, oh, you know as they work, so that when they do have an injury or something, they're able to take a few days off and not lose pay is a good thing.	2 13.33%
Benefits & Perks are fair	An episode in which an interviewee describes benefit being fair.	Maggie: For me, yes because I'm a part-time teacher. If I were a full-time, I probably would feel a bit differently, but I'm not a full-time teacher.	13 86.67%
Compensated Fairly (N=20)	An episode in which an interviewee describes whether or not their monetary compensation is fair.		
Not compensated fairly	An episode in which an interviewee describes their monetary compensation as not fair.	Interviewer: Okay. Do you think that you're compensated fairly now? Talía: (laughs)- Interviewer: (laughs)- Talía: Um, I think eventually I will be.	8 40%
Yes compensated fairly	An episode in which an interviewee describes their monetary compensation as fair.	Derek: I think so. I, I think for my skill set and, and how long I've doing it, yes. I think my, I, I feel fairly paid.	12 60%

Best Aspect Teacher (N=22)			
	An episode in which an interviewee describes the best aspect of teaching yoga.		
Personal Fulfillment	An episode in which an interviewee describes the best aspect of teaching yoga involving personal fulfillment.	Kevin: Um. People thanking you for like bringing them health and comfortability and stuff like that. It's just- you feel like a I don't know. Like just a- like you're doing good. Like you're donating good things. It's like objectively good almost, or something.	19 86.36%
Helping Others	An episode in which an interviewee mentions helping others as the best aspect of teaching yoga.	Lily: For me, it would be seeing the growth of a student. So, if a student were to just start doing yoga at the studio and you can consistently see their growth, seeing their emotional breakthroughs and physical breakthroughs as well, it's very rewarding, because I've always wanted to be a doctor growing up until I was about 20 (laugh). And so this is my way of being able to help students through injuries and emotional trauma without having that doctor symbol (laugh) or sign.	11 50%
Self Fulfillment	An episode in which an interviewee mentions self fulfilment as the best aspect of teaching yoga.	Victor: So I think that one of the reasons why I'm an effective teacher is because I've been through it. So when I'm speaking to more of the conceptual and philosophical side of my practice, I feel that people can relate to those things whether they've been to those processes or not. So like spontaneous, like metaphors will just start coming out. And afterwards, I'm like "This is really dope," because, you know, this is a direct relation for my experience, that this inspiration and encouragement that I gave the students when I'm teaching, it comes right from my heart.	13 59.09%
Work Conditions	An episode in which an interviewee describes the best aspect of teaching yoga involving work conditions.	Alexander: Freedom of time. Interviewer: Elaborate on that a little bit. Alexander: I value my success and freedom of time. As in, how much time do I have to myself and or for what I want to do in my life. And this is a position where I work 20 to 25 hours a month ... or 20 to 25 hours a week, yet still make the	3 13.64%

Worst Aspect Teacher (N=22)	An episode in which an interviewee describes the worst or most difficult aspect of teaching yoga involving.	same amount of pay as a, you know, an averagely paid worker because it's a skilled profession.	
Lack of Personal Fulfillment	An episode in which an interviewee describes the worst aspect of teaching yoga involving an absence of personal fulfillment.	Carmen: I think most difficult would be, like, learning how, for me, not to check out. Not to get into habits, especially with my cuing and, um, certain things. Just to be able to catch myself when it's getting dull for me. And to have the wherewithal to change it up so that it stays interesting for me and my students.	11 50%
Lack Helping Others	An episode in which an interviewee mentions not being able to help others as the worst aspect of teaching yoga.	Georgia: Um, I mean, I don't think there's ... you know, there's nothing that I would consider actively bad or actively, uh, difficult. There are times when there's a- a mismatch. You know, people want something from me that I don't have the kind of knowledge base or experience to give them. You know, I'm not very strong in anatomy specifically, so people will maybe sometimes ask me questions about this and that and this, and I really don't have the knowledge background to give them real advice. You know, I can just be kind of generic.	6 27.27%
Lack Self Fulfillment	An episode in which an interviewee describes the worst aspect of teaching yoga involving a lack of self fulfillment.	Brittney: I can't speak for anybody else but myself, and I would say, for me, it's the constant questioning of if the class is good enough. If my sequence is good enough. If- Did I make it hard enough, but not too hard. So just ... for me, it's a confidence thing. Like, am I doing it right? And feeling like I constantly need confirmation that, oh my class was okay. That makes it difficult for me.	9 40.91%
Work Conditions	An episode in which an interviewee describes the best aspect of teaching yoga involving work conditions.	Talia: I think probably just like, the business side of it as a contractor. Where you have to be responsible for your own insurance and your healthcare and stuff like that.	11 50%

Class Locations (N=19)	An episode in which an interviewee mention location(s) of class(es).	Note: 3 teachers in this study were inactive.	
No - Teach Different Spaces	An episode in which an interviewee mentions having classes at multiple spaces.	Maggie: No, I teach at two different studios right now.	13 68.42%
Yes- Teach in one space	An episode in which an interviewee mentions having classes at 1 space.	Interviewer: So, the place you got trained is the only place you taught. Samuel: Yeah, and where I'm teaching currently.	6 31.58%
How Paid (N=19)	An episode in which an interviewee describes how they were paid as a yoga teacher.		
Employee	An episode in which an interviewee describes being an employee.	Isabella: At TMCC I'm considered faculty, which is nice. So I'm actually on staff at the community college.	6 27.27%
Contact	An episode in which an interviewee describes being a contracted employee.	Isabella: In most of the places I teach, I'm considered a private contractor, so I have a business license	16 84.2%
Unpaid	An episode in which an interviewee is unpaid for their work.	Interviewer: Can you tell me about your rate of pay per class? Talia: Zero dollars. (laughs)	2 10.53%
Under the table	An episode in which an interviewee is paid under the table.	Ursula: At the gym, I get paid cash under the table kind of stuff.	2 10.53%
Per Class	An episode in which an interviewee describes being paid per class.	Zen: I think I get 40 dollars for a Bikram class, a 90-minute class, and then I get 35 for a 60-minute Bikram, and then I get 35 for a Vinyasa class. I also teach Vinyasa.	9 47.37%
Per Student	An episode in which an interviewee describes being paid per student.	Robert: And then I do a lot of classes on donation, especially the meditation ones. So depending on the people, they usually leave like \$10 each.	6 31.58%
Combo	An episode in which an interviewee describes being paid per class as well as bonuses per student.	Lily: But, everyone at the studio that I work at is starts at \$30. Every person over 10 people in a class, you get \$2 more per person.	7 36.84%
Yoga as Primary Income (N=21)	An episode in which an interviewee describes whether or not yoga is their primary source of income.		

No - Yoga as Primary Income	An episode in which an interviewee claims yoga is not their primary source of income.	Georgia: Yeah, I have a full-time job. Uh, the yoga teaching is my side chick.	11 52.38%
Yes - Yoga as Primary Income	An episode in which an interviewee claims yoga is their primary source of income.	Talia: Teaching yoga's my only job.	10 47.62%
Yoga as a Job Broadly (N=19)	An episode in which an interviewee describes yoga as a job in their own words.		
Highlighting Yoga as Negative Job	An episode in which an interviewee describes yoga as a job in their own words.	Kevin: Um. I didn't like it as a job as much as I thought that I would. Interviewer: (laughs) and what was that experience like? Kevin: It was fine 'cause luckily I had people around me that were just like supportive and are still down to give me opportunities when I- when I want 'cause they do trust me and stuff. And uh. Yeah. I guess I just didn't like it as much as I thought I would.	6 31.58%
Highlighting Yoga as Positive Job	An episode in which an interviewee describes yoga as a job in their own words.	Zen: Yeah, right. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, I think that just personally, um, being a yoga teacher has absolutely improved my life. I went through, um, a really difficult, uh, time in my life where I just lost a lot of people who I was close to, um, and, uh, having a place that was like safe and was mine was really important to me, you know. Um, not that like it's like mine, but like, you know, having a place where I always was welcome, um, and just all the sort of like alienation that I felt, I really think that like yoga ... um, I could've easily just, especially since I have ... I have a history of like anxiety and depression and suicidal thoughts. And if I didn't have this, uh, my job and my practice, both- both of them, um, if I didn't have these things I don't know if I could've like survived the past like year or so. So, it was just very important to have a place where I could go and be nurtured and always feel like welcome and accepted.	11 57.89%

First YTT only YTT? (N=15)	An episode in which an interviewee describes whether their first yoga teacher training has been their only training.		
No -Not Only Training	An episode in which an interviewee describes whether their first yoga teacher training has been their only training.	Hillary: No. I've had two yoga teacher trainings.	8 53.33%
Yes- Only Teacher Training	An episode in which an interviewee describes whether their first yoga teacher training has been their only training.	Joy: It was my only official training. Yes. So far.	7 46.67%

AESTHETIC & EMOTIONAL LABOR THEMES

Body Image Issues (N=19)	An episode in which an interviewee describes whether or not they've worked with students who have brought up body image issues.		
No- Body Image Issues	An episode in which an interviewee claims not having worked with students who have brought up body image issues.	Ursula: No. No. I'm sure that will come up, but not yet.	5 26.32%
Yes - Body Image Issues	An episode in which an interviewee claims they've worked with students who have brought up body image issues.	Kevin: Yeah. I guess it comes up now and then. And I just try to reassure them that it's a whole journey thing, you know, and they don't need to expect themselves to be anywhere at any point. Just keep practicing, you know.	14 73.68%
Eating Disorders (N=21)	An episode in which an interviewee describes whether or not they've worked with students who have brought up eating disorders.		
No - Eating Disorders	An episode in which an interviewee mentions not having worked with students who have brought up eating disorders.	Georgia: Uh, not in the context of yoga, you know?	13 61.9%

Yes- Eating Disorders	An episode in which an interviewee mentions having worked with students who have brought up eating disorders.	Erika: You know just, you know, if people, some women you know are bulimics or you know had issues with weight you know, anorexia or overeating, you know I just want to love them. I just want to hug them. I just want to you know have, if they could love themselves that way you know it would be less hard on themselves. You know love our demons.	8 38.1%
Weight Loss (N=21)	An episode in which an interviewee describes whether or not they've worked with students who have brought up weight loss.		
No- Weight Loss	An episode in which an interviewee claims not having worked with students who have brought up weight loss.	Lily: Not in regards to weight loss or eating disorders	4 19.05%
Yes- Weight Loss	An episode in which an interviewee claims they've worked with students who have brought up weight loss.	Winona: Yeah, so a few of my students have said, "I want to lose weight."	17 80.95%
Feel Good about Body Teaching (N=15)	An episode in which an interviewee describes whether or not feel good about their body while teaching yoga.		
No- Feel Good about Body	An episode in which an interviewee describes not feeling good about their body while teaching yoga.	Maggie: Hmm, I didn't always. Um- Interviewer: Was it difficult when you didn't feel good about your body? Maggie: Yeah, and this is ... So, how it showed up for me is I never wanted to be in front of class. Like I always taught from the back. Um, and I wanted to be not seen.	1 6.67%
Yes- Feel Good about Body	An episode in which an interviewee describes feeling good about their body while teaching yoga.	Erika: Um. I feel great about my body all the time, so yes.	9 60%
Don't Think about Body	An episode in which an interviewee describes feeling good about their body while teaching yoga.	Ophelia: Actively while I'm like, when I'm in the hot room teaching, I don't think about my body (laughs). Um, yeah. I don't, I kind of, I don't think of myself as a person when I'm teaching 'cause I'm so focused on each individual student	5 33.33%

Concerned Looks (N=15)	An episode in which an interviewee describes whether or not they're concerned about the way their body looks while teaching yoga.		
Not Concerned	An episode in which an interviewee describes not being concerned about the way their body while teaching yoga.	Zen: No. Um, not- not the way my body physically is. I don't think that's an issue for me. When I'm teaching Vinyasa it's more of like I want to make sure I'm doing the pose to the best of my ability so that I am setting a good example. But, that's more about my practice, not my body.	10 66%
Concerned	An episode in which an interviewee describes being concerned about the way their body while teaching yoga.	Kevin: I do. Like I try to not have that happen, but it would still come up. And that's yeah. Yeah. Definitely. Because I want to look like I've got the poses down, and I want to look like a model where- like some people understand when they look at my body, or something, 'cause I've learned that way before too. Yeah.	5 33%
Yoga Teacher Attire (N=22)	An episode in which an interviewee describes their attire as a yoga teacher.		
Whatever Anything	An episode in which an interviewee describes their attire as a yoga teacher as not being neither professional nor having a dress code enforced.	Erika: Well, I like to wear colors and I like to wear my jewelry that I make and um I'm kinda of a little bit, I teach out of the box, so my yoga dress is a little bit out of the box. I do not care what people think. I be myself.	17 77.27%
Dress Code	An episode in which an interviewee describes their attire as a yoga teacher needing to follow a dress code.	Derek: Um, I usually will wear either a, uh, uh, uh, shirt, uh, sleeveless, uh, shirt, um, some of the gyms require it, ironically. Which is, well it's kind of funny is the first time I ever saw a dress code that I think was more slated against the men then the women was one of the gyms, the men are required to wear a tank top or a sleeveless shirt. But the women are not.	1 4.55%
Professional	An episode in which an interviewee describes their attire as a yoga teacher needing to be professional.	Ursula: Well I try to be professional and keep everything covered. I don't want my boobs hanging out or anything, or little bootie shorts on. I try to keep it clean because there are men that	4 18.18%

		come in sometimes, and they come with their wives. You don't want to make anything uncomfortable or make someone feel uncomfortable. I always try to be professional in that manner. Jessica: So that would be wearing what? Long- Ursula: Just long pants and I usually rock a long sleeve, and then tuck everything in so my shirt's not coming up or anything.	
Importance Attire (N=22)	An episode in which an interviewee describes the importance of their attire as a yoga teacher.		
Not Important - Attire	An episode in which an interviewee describes their attire as a yoga teacher as not important.	Maggie: Um, I would say not very important.	9 40.91%
Important - Attire	An episode in which an interviewee describes their attire as a yoga teacher as important.	Kitty: I think it's very important because if you don't look the part, then who's gonna think you are the teacher? You know, or if you look really ... maybe you look the part, but you've overdone it. Like the front, your- your top, maybe is too low or something, something along that line.	13 59.09%
Teachers & Body Talk (N=22)	An episode in which an interviewee describes whether or not they've heard teachers engage in body talk		
No- Body Talk	An episode in which an interviewee claims not having heard yoga teachers engage in body talk.	Erika: No. I don't think I have and I'm glad for that.	6 27.27%
Yes - Body Talk	An episode in which an interviewee claims having heard yoga teachers engage in body talk.	Brandon: I mean, in general, we have discussions about, I would say, physical capabilities, because as one teacher moves to another teacher and or the students move around to take different classes, it's nice that we are able to communicate what their needs are.	16 72.73%
Talking Before or After	An episode in which an interviewee describes whether or not they spend		

(N=18)	time talking to their students before or after class.		
No- Talking	An episode in which an interviewee claims they do not spend time talking to their students before or after class.	Samuel: You know, (chuckles), I really don't.	1 5.56%
Yes-Talking	An episode in which an interviewee claims they spend time talking to their students before or after class.	Kevin: Yeah. Definitely. You'll-you'll be talking a lot.	17 94.44%
Enjoy Talking Before or After	An episode in which an interviewee describes whether or not they enjoy talking to their students before or after class.		
(N=16)			
No- Enjoy Talking	An episode in which an interviewee claims they do not enjoy spending time talking to their students before or after class.	Ophelia: I'm not a very social person. (laughs). And so I struggle, I'm not, I've never been good with like conversation. (laughs). So, yeah.	2 11.76%
Yes-Enjoy Talking	An episode in which an interviewee claims they do enjoy spending time talking to their students before or after class.	Carmen: I really do. It helps me connect to my students on a personal level and really see them as individuals rather than kind of like teaching to a crowd. The way that I was trained to teach in vinyasa and the way that I used to teach was very much also like a performance, where I felt like I was putting on kind of like a stage production and then the students were my audience. And now the way that I teach is very much about like, um, each individual student and their needs. So being able to connect with them before class and figuring out like, this person has a shoulder injury, this person's going on, has an emotional issue going on and then being able to teach the class and cater to them and speak to them as individuals is really empowering, not just for the students, but for me as a teacher as well. It becomes less about me	15 88.24%

		putting on a show and more what do the students need?	
Teaching and Body Pressure (N=19)	An episode in which an interviewee talks about teaching yoga and whether or not it make them feel pressured to have a certain body type.		
Yes- Teaching and Body Pressure	An episode in which an interviewee talks about teaching making them feel pressured to have a certain body type.	Interviewer: Does teaching yoga make you feel pressured to have a certain type of body? Ophelia: Sometimes. Interviewer: Tell me about that. Ophelia: With, like I mentioned before, the whole Instagram thing, um, I get self conscious. I don't post a lot of yoga pictures. Erika: Let me think about this. That's a very, very good question. You know it could, but since I don't care what people think (laughing), no.	4 21.05%
No-Teaching and Body Pressure	An episode in which an interviewee talks about teaching not making them feel pressured to have a certain body type.		15 78.95%
Pressure Ideal Yoga Body (N=7)	An episode in which an interviewee describes whether or not they feel pressure to have to the "ideal yoga body".		
Yes- Pressure Ideal Yoga Body	An episode in which an interviewee claims they have felt pressured to have the ideal yoga body.	Lily: I did before, because a lot of the studios that I used to go to, I, I felt like I was fat. Like I felt like I didn't fit in.	4 57.14%
No - Pressure Ideal Yoga Body	An episode in which an interviewee claims they have not felt pressured to have the ideal yoga body.	Carmen: No. I think, for me, I've been, um, like I said, it kind of did the opposite for me. I feel like I-I started doing yoga because I wanted to lose weight, and I thought that's what yoga did for people, but then when I, when I did the yoga, I realized that my body is perfect the way it is. So it-it actually worked out the opposite for me.	3 42.86%

Age, Gender, Race, Class Stereotypes & Embodiment

Skinny Wealthy White Women (N=19)	An episode in which an interviewee describes their thoughts on the yoga stereotype that yoga is for skinny, wealthy, white women.
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Importance of breaking stereotypes	An episode in which an interviewee describes stereotypes need to be broken.	Carmen: I think yoga is about connecting to your body and your breath and I think if you have a body, then yoga is for you. I definitely think that in the way that yoga is promoted, especially when you look at yoga magazines or some, like, Instagram and things like that, there's a lot of that representation of white skinny women doing really hard, inaccessible yoga poses, and I do believe that there is um, there is a movement to shift that view because it's not accurate in terms of who yoga is for. So, just being conscious as yoga teachers and studio owners that we are actually promoting our services to the people that it's for, meaning showing different bodies and different skin colors and different genders and different levels of yoga poses, that we don't always have to be doing handstand in every promotional photo.	6 31.58%
Inequalities in access	An episode in which an interviewee describes inequalities in access to yoga.	Zen: I think the reason why that stereotype exists is because white wealthy- wealthy skinny women are the ones who yoga is most accessible to for many different reasons. Um, because ... Interviewer: Tell me more about that. Zen: Yeah. So, because, you know, yoga is expensive. So, if you have more money you're gonna be more likely to do yoga.	12 63.16%
Misconceptions about yoga	An episode in which an interviewee describes misconceptions about yoga.	Kitty: Well, I think I answered that before when I said that, you know, I think that ... I think that any misconception of a requirement in order to do ... in order to be able to do yoga is incorrect. I mean, you don't have to have ... you don't even have to have a mat.	16 84.2%
Yoga & Masculinity (N=15)	An episode in which an interviewee describes how yoga represents masculinity or masculine interests.		
Absence of Gender	An episode in which an interviewee describes an absence of gender in yoga.	Samuel: There's no femininity or masculinity in yoga.	3 20%

History of Yoga	An episode in which an interviewee describes the history of yoga being male dominated.	Carmen: Yes. So, that's really interesting to me because yoga is, began as not woman inclusive at all actually. In the history of yoga, teachers are male and women were not really allowed to teach or practice yoga or spirituality in the tradition of yoga and it wasn't until fairly recently in the early 1900s when women were really encouraged to practice yoga. So, I think it's really interesting that now it's considered to be a women's sport.	2 13.33%
Non-Macho Men	An episode in which an interviewee describes male yoga practitioners as not abiding by traditional gender norms such as perpetuating toxic masculinity.	Piper: I think it takes a male person comfort and security within themselves to engage into something that is considered to be a woman's practice and being able to soften and move through with that and be okay with it.	6 40%
Physical Strength or Stamina	An episode in which an interviewee describes the physical aspects of yoga embodying masculinity.	Joy: Hmm. I'd say it ... it does in every way. I mean, it's a balance of masculine and feminine, but, um, all of the strength that's included in yoga, I feel, is masculine and empowering on that level.	6 40%
N/A	An episode in which an interviewee does not describe how yoga represents masculinity or masculine interests.	Kevin: So, I don't know how I'm gonna answer this because I'm not even sure what masculine is supposed to mean, you know?	3 20%
Yoga & Gender Equality (N=22)	An episode in which an interviewee describes whether or not there is gender equality in how yoga teachers are compensated.		
Yes- Equality	An episode in which an interviewee describes there is equality in yoga.	Isabella: To my understanding yes. I don't actually know a lot of other peoples compensation, which is really interesting. We tend ... I think this is across the board in whatever industry you're in, we all sort of feel like we need to be closed mouthed about that, and I think it benefits everyone to be more open. As far as I know we're compensated equally, the places that I teach.	13 59.09%
No- Equality	An episode in which an interviewee describes there being inequalities in yoga.	Brandon: Y- yes. Y- You are unequally compensated based on, like, your level of teaching or how-	5 22.73%

Don't Know/ Not Sure	An episode in which an interviewee describes not being sure about gender equality in yoga.	how well your classes do. That- that's where it becomes uneven. (laughs) Interviewer: Meaning? Brandon: Meaning that if your numbers don't lie, you will be paid more, regardless of male or female. Joy: Um, you know, I'm not quite sure on that. I don't personally know a whole lot of men in the field. I can probably count on one hand how many men are yoga instructors that I personally know. So ...	5 22.73%
Teachers and Body Size (N=21)	An episode in which an interviewee describes how body size or shape impacts a person's ability to teach yoga.		
Body Size Doesn't Matter	An episode in which an interviewee describes body size or shape not impacting ability to teach yoga.	Kevin: Um. Like anybody can teach yoga. Like if you know what you're doing, and you actually- it might- maybe it would take more work if you were like a paraplegic or something- I have no idea. But I'm pretty confident that anybody could learn yoga well enough to relay it to other people and have them teach themselves and that whole thing.	16 76.19%
Fat could be Advantage	An episode in which an interviewee describes how being fat could be an advantage.	Carmen: I think it really just depends on the person. You can either see it as a hindrance or you can see it as an advantage.	1 4.76%
Too Fat = Problem	An episode in which an interviewee describes too much body fat could impact the ability of a person to teach yoga.	Kitty: Teaching it at, it helps not being overweight because there's gonna be things that you're gonna be doing, showing poses, teaching sequences. If you were even overweight a little bit versus grossly overweight it's gonna compromise you.	6 28.57%
Stereotypes of Ideal Yoga Body (N=9)	An episode in which an interviewee describes stereotypes of the ideal yoga body.		
Yes- Aware of Stereotypes	An episode in which an interviewee describes being aware of stereotypes of the ideal yoga body.	Isabella: Yeah. So I do sometimes ... I encounter the, "Oh, I can't do yoga because I'm not flexible."	8 88.89%

Unaware of Yoga Stereotypes	An episode in which an interviewee describes not being aware of stereotypes of the ideal yoga body.	Derek: I don't think so? Um, I don't think yoga instructors are, well I don't, I don't know what a yoga instructor's perfect body would be. Um-	1 1.11%
Ideal Yoga Body (N=5)	An episode in which an interviewee describes what the ideal yoga body is.		
Flexible	An episode in which an interviewee describes the ideal yoga body as being flexible.	Ophelia: There's the super skinny like right, right now, the yoga body I've seen is stick straight, no butt, no boobs, nothing, and super, super hyper mobile flexible. That's it. Always bleach blonde.	2 40%
Slim	An episode in which an interviewee describes the ideal yoga body as being slim.	Lily: And they're very skinny.	4 80%
Gender	An episode in which an interviewee describes the ideal yoga body as being gendered.	Allie: I would say the stereotype is a young 20s or 30s woman who is super fit and wears lululemon pants.	4 80%
Fancy Attire	An episode in which an interviewee describes the ideal yoga body as wearing fancy yoga attire.	Victor: Fancy yoga clothes	2 40%
White	An episode in which an interviewee describes the ideal yoga body as being white.	Interviewer: What gender and ethnicity do you see when you see this ideal practitioner? Lily: Definitely Caucasian and female.	4 80%
Other	An episode in which an interviewee describes the ideal yoga body as being something other than white, wearing fancy attire, gendered, flexible, or slim.	Victor: glowing skin, radiant aura (laughing)	5 100%
Men Breaking Gender Norm (N=16)	An episode in which an interviewee describes whether or not they've heard men talk about how practicing yoga breaks gender norms.		
Yes - Men breaking Gender Norms	An episode in which an interviewee claims they've heard men talk about how practicing yoga breaks gender norms.	Kevin: Yeah. Like worried that it might challenge their conception of masculinity or something like that. Yeah. That's totally a thing.	13 81.25%

No - Men breaking Gender Norms	An episode in which an interviewee claims they've not heard men talk about how practicing yoga breaks gender norms.	Erika: Um. No. I think though that there certainly are more women in yoga classes and I think that the men that come are really giving themselves a gift.	3 18.75%
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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: PERSONAL EXPERIENCE & BROAD ATTITUDES ABOUT YOGA & YOGA CULTURE

- 1) Tell me the story of how you got into yoga.
 - a. Was there anything going on in your life at the time that made yoga especially important to you?
 - b. Some people describe yoga as empowering. Was that your experience? (Why? Why not?)
- 2) Do you have a specific school or philosophy of yoga that you ascribe to?
 - a. What attracted you to this school/philosophy?

YOGA AS A JOB

- 1) Tell me the story of how you ended up being a yoga instructor.
 - a. Can you tell me about the price of your teacher training?
- 2) How long have you been teaching?
- 3) How long do you think you'll continue to teach?
- 4) Where or through what institutions have you taught?
- 5) How many classes do you currently teach a week?
 - a) Are all of your classes at the same studio/gym/space?
- 6) Do you do anything else for money besides teach yoga? Is this your only job?
- 7) Can you tell me about your rate of pay per class?
 - a) How much do you think you make in an average month?
 - b) Do you receive any benefits outside of your salary? Health care? Paid leave? Free gym/studio access?
 - i) What would being offered benefits mean to you?
 - c) Learning/experience of being an independent contractor.
 - d) Do you think that you're compensated fairly?
 - e) To your understanding, are men and women are compensated equally in this profession?
- 8) Have you ever been injured through yoga? Can you tell me what happened?
 - a) Did this impact your ability to teach/make money?
 - b) Were you given any time off?
 - c) Did you fully recover? (If not, how do you manage working while still affected by this injury.)
 - d) Did this injury change your practice?
- 9) What is the best aspect of being a yoga instructor?
- 10) What's the worst or most difficult aspect of being a yoga instructor?
- 11) Do you incorporate any specific themes or intentions in your classes. What are they?
 - a) How do you incorporate this in your classes?
 - b) Some people say that yoga is just a thing for wealthy white skinny women. What do you think?
 - i) Do certain demographics, such as a student's age, class, or race, change your overall teaching methodology? If so, can you tell me a more about that.
 - ii) How do you connect/engage with students that come from a different background than yourself?
- 12) Do you spend time talking to your students before or after class?
 - a) Do you enjoy this aspect of your work? Why/why not?
- 12) In what ways does yoga represent masculinity or masculine interests?
 - a) Can you tell me about a time a man has talked to you about how they felt they were breaking a gender norm practicing yoga?

13) There has been a recent outburst of people coming forward and admitting they've been victims of sexual harassment in the workplace. Have you had an experience like this in the context of your yoga profession?

a) Can you tell me more about that?

YOGA & BODY IMAGE

1) One of the topics I'm most interested in is how yoga teachers work with bodies and how people feel about their bodies. Has yoga changed the way you feel about your body? (How?)

a) Can you tell me about when you first noticed that you thought about your body differently?

b) What was that experience like?

c) Could you tell me a little more about (Before? After? Now?)

2) Has your yoga practice changed your physical body?

a. How?

b. How has that experience made you feel?

3) Tell me about your appearance as you teach. What do you typically wear?

4) How important is your attire in relation to your job performance?

5) Does teaching yoga make you feel pressured to have a certain type of body?

6) (How) does body size impact the ability of a person to teach yoga?

7) Some people think that yoga is a good way to have body acceptance. What do you think?

8) Some people think that yoga is a good way to change how your body looks. What do you think?

9) Some people think that yoga is a good way to improve health. What do you think?

10) Do you incorporate any messages or intentions about positive body image in your teaching? Can you describe that?

11) Have you ever worked with clients who have spoken with you about body image issues?

12) Have you ever worked with clients who have spoken with you about weight loss?

13) Have you ever worked with clients who have spoken with you about eating disorders?

BODY TALK

1) Tell me about your relationship to your body while you're teaching.

2) How do you talk about the human body while you're teaching yoga?

(Tell me about how you incorporate your physical body into your classes. How do you move? How often are you moving? Why?)

3) Tell me about your physical relationship to other bodies while you're teaching.

a. Do you touch your students? How often?

b. Do you like touching your students? Why or why not?

4) Have you ever heard or been in conversations when other yoga instructors have talked about students' bodies? (Talk physical capabilities? Physical appearance? Body size?)

5) In what ways, do different bodies practicing yoga challenge mainstream yoga culture.

a) What bodies do you find easiest to work with?

b) What bodies do you find challenging to work with?

6) How do you manage working with students with a variety of body types?

(Larger bodies? Non-able bodies?)

CLOSING QUESTIONS

1) Is there anything you'd like to share with me about yoga as a job?

2) Is there anything you'd like to share with me about yoga & body image?

3) Is there anything else you'd like to share?

4) Is there anybody you know who teaches yoga that would be interested in participating in this study?

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