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An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis A Social Revolution: International Yogi PeaceBuilders

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An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
A Social Revolution: International Yogi PeaceBuilders

by

Jodie Berman

A Dissertation Presented to the
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences of Nova Southeastern University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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**Nova Southeastern University
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences**

This dissertation was submitted by Jodie Berman under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

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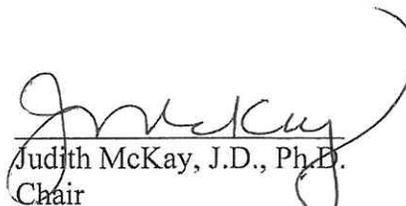
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Abstract

This study addressed a group of people called karma yogis who have been of service in the world. The population I analyzed are those assisting others in developing countries that are in communities that have been marginalized by war, political unrest, and unstable conditions. This study is an interpretative phenomenological analysis that illuminated the lived experience of karma yogis who volunteered in developing countries as peacebuilders. The research focused on understanding this group of international peacebuilders and their dedication to service which affected the social identity of the yogi. Exploring the experiences and what it meant to be an international karma yogi was at the core of this research. The theoretical underpinnings were based on Gandhian nonviolence, peace philosophies and human needs theory. A keen understanding of these international peacebuilders allowed for insight into why their philosophy is important within the field of peace studies. Three participants who are yogis were interviewed as to their experiences as peacebuilders in developing countries. The questions in this research were what is the lived experience of karma yogis as international peacebuilders? What does it mean to be an international karma yogi? What are the experiences of international karma yogis? What is the identity of the international karma yogi? Through conducting and analyzing the interviews this study revealed the lived experience of karma yogis as international peacebuilders. Defining the path of a peacebuilder, interpreting the impact of the international karma yogi, reviewing the life of service as an international karma yogi and reflecting on the identity of an international karma yogi were the main themes that addressed the questions being explored within this study.

Chapter One: Introduction

This study addressed a group of people called karma yogis who are being of service in the world. The population that was analyzed was those assisting others in developing countries that are in communities that have been marginalized by war, political unrest, and unstable conditions. In discovering the meaning of the work of karma yogis as peace builders I employed an interpretative phenomenological analysis that examined the lives of three international peace builders and the contribution that they made in the communities they were in. The purpose of this study was to extrapolate the meaning from the work that karma yogis exhibit by being of service in developing countries. I was interested in expanding the pool of research in the field of peace building through the analysis of karma yogis. These three participants were interviewed in depth twice and asked questions in relation to their history, mission, role, impact and identity within their time in the developing country. The objective of this research was to understand their work and how the major themes relate to identity and peace building measures. The phenomenon I am focused on is the lived experience of karma yogis as international peacebuilders. My research questions are the following: What does it mean to be an international karma yogi? What are the experiences of the international karma yogi? What is the identity of the international karma yogi?

Researcher's Perspective

I decided to focus my research on the lived experience of yogis because I myself am someone who practices yoga regularly and adheres to the philosophy of the yogi lifestyle. I had encountered people who were choosing to do humanitarian work in

developing countries because they saw a deficit and wanted to make a difference. There was a gap in the literature in regards to alternative possibilities for who an international peace builder would be and examining their experiences.

Justification

My research is specific and an untapped area that benefits the body of research within the peace studies field. The group of people whose essence I was interested in exploring were karma yogis. Most people are familiar with yogis from taking yoga classes in their local community. They move their body in specific postures called asanas and breathe deeply into the present moment. Yogis live by ancient Hindu principles in which they strive for wellness physically, mentally and spiritually (Wilson, p. 261). In India yogis have existed for centuries based on the teachings of Hinduism. According to Yoshi (1965) in order to obtain peace and a divine life there are four branches of yoga to incorporate into one's life. The first one is Janana Yoga which is about learning, knowledge and understanding. The second is Bhakti Yoga which is devotion to faith. The third is Raja Yoga which states the importance of meditation, and the last branch of yoga and the area on which I would like to focus is Karma Yoga which is about service to mankind. It is about devoting your life to altruistic endeavors in dedication to help the global world. "The central idea of karma yoga seems to be that we cannot remain without acting for a short time. We have to respond to the environment" (Joshi, 1965, p. 62).

Yoga has been practiced for over five thousand years through sacred Hindu texts called the Vedas and the Upanishads. As yoga evolved, a yogi named Patanjali created a text on yoga in the second century, titled the Yoga Sutras. This outlined the philosophy

and practice of yoga and included 195 sutras (truths) which became very well known (Emerson, 2011, p.26). The most well-known of the Yoga Sutras are the eight limbs of yoga.

The Eight Limbs of Yoga

The eight limbs of yoga are suggestions on living a meaningful and purposeful life through the philosophy of yoga. The first limb is yama, which is comprised of our moral principles. There are five yamas: ahimsa (nonviolence), satya (truth and honesty), asteya (nonstealing), brachmacharya (nonlust), and aparigraha (nonpossessiveness). This limb is about our sense of integrity and how important it is to be conscious of these yamas. The second limb is niyama, which is based on our spirituality and personal practices. There are five niyamas which are shauca (purity), santosha (contentment), tapas (austerity), svadhyaya (study of sacred text) and ishvara-pranidhana (living with awareness of the divine). The third limb is asana which is the physical practice of yoga; the postures (Carrico, 2007, p 3).

The fourth limb is pranayama which translates to control the breath. This limb understands the importance of rhythmic deep breaths for a full healthy life. The fifth limb is pratyahara, a withdrawal from the outside world and the ability to go inward and be more reflective about our wellbeing and inner growth. The sixth limb is dharana which is concentration. Our mind focuses on one thing, with the goal being to still our mind which creates a sense of peace. The seventh limb is dhyana which is meditation. In this place there is a oneness with the universe; it is the ideal state of consciousness. Lastly, the eighth limb is Samadhi which is the ultimate goal, a state of ecstasy. There is a

connectedness to you and everything else that is living. This stage happens with a continual devotion to the yogic life; it is enlightenment (Carrico, 2007, p 3). Patanjali's Yoga Sutras are how current day yogis thrive, and the philosophies that guide their lives.

According to those that have studied and practiced yoga "Yoga is more about inner strength than outer muscles. The whole intention of your yoga practice is for you to be an integrated human being in all ways" (Bennett, 2002, p. xvii). It is about evolving spiritually as a person so that you can then give back to the world all of the beauty that is has given you. According to Bennett (2002), "Yoga is Sanskrit for yoke which means to connect. It has the ability to connect all of you; mind, body and soul and then outward to the world" (p. 6). There is no judgment in yoga, and karma yoga allows you to take the spiritual practices that you utilize within yourself and connect outward to your community. Yoga is meditation in action: "Yoga brings about a state devoid of conditioning in which one understands himself and the world in a direct manner, without the mediation of any bias or opinion. Yoga brings about an end of all search, effort, seeking, and becoming, making one's mind silent and steady. It bestows upon the individual freedom from disturbance, tension, and grief" (Joshi, 1965, p. 56).

There have been quite a few yogis who have been of service internationally, who have started organizations that have helped genocide survivors, rebuilt communities, rehabilitated the lives of child soldiers, and challenged the perimeters of peace in areas that are greatly lacking it (yogajournal.com, 2011). There has been almost no academic research completed on the international yogi community. In order to address this gap, the goal of this research is to tell the story of three karma yogis and to explore the lived

experience of their peace building efforts. It will contribute to the area of peace studies by diversifying the body of literature that currently exists. In research, it is imperative to illustrate and cover all groups even if they are outside of the mainstream. Karma yogis, like many other peace builders, are people who have the capacity to change the lives of many people in the work that they do.

Goals of the Research

There has been limited research in regards to karma yogis and their peace building efforts in developing countries. The mission of karma yogis is to be of service, spread peace, and have altruistic intentions towards all humans. The first goal of this research was to clarify and understand the lived experience of yogi foreign peace builders. Through interpretative phenomenological analysis, I illuminated the lived experience of karma yogis in developing countries. This was a study of meaning that looked at the lives of karma yogis being of service and their motivation to give of their time, resources, and selves internationally.

My second goal was to understand the essence of the karma yogi and see how that manifests in terms of this phenomenon that they experience. I was looking at their experiences through their service that they provided to marginalized populations. How did their mission unfold in these countries and why is their work important? My third goal was to understand the identity of the karma yogi and how their identity changed through being peace builders in developing countries. When the identity of the group that they are focusing on changed, did the identity of the yogi change with these people? Are their identities intertwined through working in such intimate and life changing situations?

These are questions that emerged through this research. I wanted to be aware of the symbiotic relationship between yogis and the population they are serving. The identity of the peace builder has been researched, but the yogi as a peace builder has yet to be examined.

Lastly, my fourth goal was to comprehend not only who these peace builders throughout the world are, but how did this affect their overall community efforts through the perception and lived experience of the yogi. Karma yoga's intention is of being selfless and of service to others. Yoga in all of its forms is based on accepting and finding gratitude for what is and for truly helping others. When the philosophy of yoga has been taken to a community, how did that alter the community through the yogi? These goals are comprehensive in interpreting a study of meaning with a group of people who had a particular lived experience.

Summary

This research examined the efforts of international karma yogis and the humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts utilized by this population in developing countries. The purpose of this study was to contribute to the body of research in peace studies and analyze the meaning of the lived experiences of karma yogis. Three karma yogis were interviewed and all yogis were asked what does it mean to be an international karma yogi? What are the experiences of the international karma yogi? What is the identity of the international karma yogi? Throughout the research process the meaning, experiences and identity of the yogis were revealed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The focus of this study was on the lived experience of karma yogis who are being of service in developing countries across the world. The phenomenon and essence of yogis as peace builders and what their identity is in this role was examined. This was a study of meaning and understanding with a focus on peace studies. There have been other studies on yoga, but none relating to the work of activism that karma yogis contribute to around the world. There was research done at the University of British Columbia that was a phenomenological study on ecological awareness through yoga teachers. Four yoga teachers were interviewed and themes were drawn on the correlation of inner awareness of the yoga teacher being tied to having a stronger ecological awareness in life (Vayali, 2003). In this research yoga was transformative in the peace process of ecology and nature itself. Another study at the University of Texas provided an introspective look at yoga off the mat that illustrated the physiological and psychological benefits for those who had endured trauma (Scott, 2008). This study has focused on peace and community building in developing countries for karma yogis.

The Roots of Karma Yoga

Karma yoga is selfless service with no personal interests or ego attached. It is service that tends to the basic needs of people. “The root of the word karma is the Sanskrit Kri, literally meaning ‘to do’. The essence of karma relies heavily on action” (Rice, 2011). Karma is thoughtful action set out into the world to help others with a dedication to service. According to Bergmann “True service is all about empowerment, taking your skills, talents, knowledge and understanding, and using them in order to help

others to draw forth their own strengths” (Bergmann, p.106). Karma yoga is about work, and duty without the attachment of a personal reward instead rather to be of service to others (Vivekananda, p. 41). The highest motive is always to help the world, which in turn helps us.

The desire to do good is the highest motive power we have, but we must remember it is a privilege to help others. Do not stand on a high pedestal and take five cents in your hand and say “Here, my poor man!” but be grateful that the poor man is there so that by making a gift to him you are able to help yourself. It is not the receiver that is blessed it is the giver. Be thankful that you are allowed to exercise your power of benevolence and mercy in the world, and thus become pure and perfect (Vivekananda, p. 61). It is the idea of being unselfish in order to achieve full freedom.

In the last decade there has been a surge of western yogis who have been trailblazers in the area of karma yoga in terms of international peace building missions. To discuss a few of these programs and organizations that are reaching those in developing countries, the most well known are Off the Mat, Into the World, which encompasses the Global Seva Challenge and Bare Witness Humanitarian Tour, Yogis without Borders, the Africa Yoga Project, The Mandala House, and Project Air. Yogis are also helping in areas domestically with cancer and AID survivors, trauma survivors, rape, incest, the military, eating disorders and many more. Yoga allows individuals to release what no longer serves them both emotionally and physically. The outreach of the yogi community is far reaching. Yoga practitioners realized that yoga is much more than being on the mat and

knew that they needed to take their philosophies and principles to their communities and beyond.

Off the Mat, Into the World was founded by yoga instructor and activist Seane Corne who resides and does karma yoga in the Los Angeles area. Through this organization they began a Global Seva Challenge which states that anyone who can raise \$20,000 will travel with Seane and her group to a post conflict country that still needs their assistance in the aftermath of tragedy. Each humanitarian tour took about twenty people and raised about a half million dollars for the community they were assisting. In 2008 they were in Cambodia, 2009 in Uganda, 2010 in South Africa and 2011 in Haiti. The Global Seva Challenge is about raising funding and experiencing service in these countries in tumultuous times. “Being of service has become a natural extension of my yoga practice. It took thousands of downward dogs, buckets of sweat, hours of meditation and prayer for me to understand that yoga is about the collective, not just the individual. Service is my way of experiencing this unity through outreach and action.” (Corne, 2010).

Yogis without Borders was founded by Elaine Valdov, who is the Director of the International Institute for a Culture of Peace in the United Nations. This program encourages and trains yogis to travel to post conflict areas that have suffered and assist them. The Africa Project was started in 2007 and founded by Paige Elenson. Their service is in communities in East Africa, Kenya. The Africa Project offers free yoga classes, builds schools, funds education, health services, environmental pursuits, job training, food stipends, and temporary housing (africayogaproject.org). The Mandala

House was founded by Lenny Williams; her center is based in Manhattan and she specializes in being of service in post conflict populations for survivors of gender based violence. Currently her projects are in the Congo, Uganda, Burundi, and Sri Lanka. In these programs she has trained survivors to be peer counselors and to help others in their communities, has taught and trained yoga to those in the country, and made sure mental health services were provided. She has worked with child soldiers and other vulnerable populations (mandalahouse.org). Lastly, Project Air formed in 2009 and was founded by Deidre Summerbell. Their organization is located in Kigali, Rwanda and their focus is on sexual violence survivors in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide. Their focus is on HIV, women and children. Their plans are to expand to the Eastern Congo area of Africa and spread karma yoga (project-air.org). There are hundreds of other yogi activists who are being of service and extending their hand but this research will focus on yogis who have completed humanitarian missions in developing countries.

The foundation of karma yoga believes in selfless service as well as the importance of the asana, a yogi's postures and practice. Each organization mentioned offered service to the community and service in the context of asana yoga. Yogic breathing and postures offer mental and medical health benefits as well as a tool of relaxation and a strength that emerges from deep within. According to Bergmann "One of the best things about practicing the physical aspect of yoga postures is that concentration, awareness, and attention are built into the system. The practice of traditional yoga postures is introspective in nature and encourages deep breathing and being fully established in the present moment" (Bergmann, p. 24). In these post conflict areas where

tension and unease is second nature to those that live in these regions yoga can provide a healthy sense of peace and harmony in an existence that is unstable and filled with fear. Yoga has been shown to ease depression, anxiety and assist in reducing a state of panic overall, increasing the health and wellbeing of an individual in crisis mode. Yoga has illustrated its properties of transformation in terms of conflict within an individual and in a community as a whole. In this research, conflict transformation was integral to the work that took place for these three karma yogis. Research for conflict transformation and peace building allows for an understanding of the lived experience of karma yogis.

Conflict Transformation

John Paul Lederach (2003) states that conflict transformation is a lens through which you see the social conflict that is taking place. The lens allows us to view the immediate situation, the underlying patterns and the framework of the conflict. Conflict transformation asks to analyze the relationships within the conflict. In order to transform we must choose to see the conflict and the potential for the conflict to change in a positive manner. How do we reduce violence and promote and engage dialogue? Lederach's beliefs are that there are change goals in conflict transformation that include personal, relational, structural, and cultural goals. In this model you are maximizing growth and understanding, minimizing poor communication, addressing root causes and identifying cultural patterns in relation to violence. Due to the fact that conflict transformation is relationship-centered, power and identity must be negotiated and renegotiated for long term transformation to take place and peace to last.

In Warnecke and Franke's research *Sustainable Conflict Transformation: An Analytical Model for Assessing the Contribution of Development Activities to Peacebuilding* (2010), there is a direct correlation with sustainable peace and conflict transformation. Sustainable conflict transformation requires peacebuilding, peacemaking and peacekeeping. This approach is based on making sure that there are shared values and reciprocal relationships in the building of capital that is needed for long term peace. In building social capital infrastructure, relationships and identity is examined (Warnecke & Franke, 2010, p. 79). Peacebuilding must have the support of the community, solid infrastructure and healthy relationships with the local population.

In developing peace there is a multistage model for sustainable conflict transformation that is conceptualized along three axes. The socio-dimensional axis is concerned with infrastructure, relationships and conflict attitudes. The temporal axis examines the conflict transformation process and fostering sustainability. Lastly, the functional axis looks to security and public order, justice and reconciliation, governance and participation as well as social and economic well-being. This model is a tool that allows analysis and to identify all areas that contribute to conflict transformation while speaking to the gaps that might exist in a post-conflict setting (Warnecke & Franke, 2010, p. 85). This model not only examines all areas but the entirety of the timespan starting with the initial response of peacebuilding to long term planning and sustainability.

For conflict transformation to be successful structural violence must not be present and imbalances in power must be shifted so that the marginalized population is able to have autonomy (Jeong, 2000, p. 38). When a conflict is resolved it allows for

conflict to ensue once again in the near future if transformation does not occur between the parties. If relationships are not strengthened and there is not a bridge in the gap of differences in terms of needs and wants there will be future conflict. Conflict transformation is integral to long lasting peace.

Peace Building

Peacebuilding has roots in several areas. It could encompass nonviolent activists attempting human rights, community builders, relief workers, community mediators, those facilitating dialogue with conflicting parties or initiating change through public policy (Schirch, 2004). According to Schirch “Peacebuilding seeks to prevent, reduce, transform, and help people recover from violence that has not yet led to massive civil unrest. At the same time, it empowers people to foster relationships at all levels that sustain them and their environment” (Schirch, 2004, p. 9). Through this research, an integral part of what I am focusing on is relationships and connections to the community and their people. Peacebuilding supports the development of relationships and a productive forum for conflict resolution that addresses human needs. According to Lisa Schirch, associate professor of peacebuilding, transforming relationships to ones that no longer harm rights or needs of others is the key to peacebuilding. Relationships in a cycle of conflict require that the trauma is healed, the conflict be transformed and that justice is done (Schirch, 2004, p. 46).

In the area of conflict and peace building the USAID has identified broad theories of change. The areas include the following. First, inside-out peacebuilding which focuses on changing the individual thereby society reflecting that change. Attitudes toward peace

is a theory that influences people's attitudes toward peace which would include advocacy or peace education. Healthy relationships allow for various groups to be bridged together in order to incorporate more interactions. Peace processes encourage negotiation.

Functioning institutions ask that the governing institutions are held accountable, and are transparent as well as effective. Finally coming to terms with the past which includes transitional justice and trauma healing (Zellizer, 2013, p. 14). Ongoing monitoring and evaluation must occur for these theories of change to have long lasting results.

Johan Galtung has been a leader in peace research for over 25 years in which he discusses positive and negative peace. Years later a culture of peace has been encouraged. The actual term peacebuilding entered into the international arena in 1992 when former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali defined it as an Agenda for Peace for post conflict action, although Johan Galtung coined it in the 1970's (Moola, 2006). The exact definition of peace varies "The United Nations General Assembly (1997) has defined the culture of peace as a set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior, and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups, and nations." (Alger, 2007, p 535) The United Nations believes that for peace and nonviolence to exist, it is necessary to have "A culture of peace through education, sustainable economic and social development, equality between genders, democratic participation, tolerance, communication and the promotion of international peace and security" (Alger, 2007, p 535). The UN system of peacebuilding now involves those in NGO's, businesses, the local community and authorities. An NGO Global Network was

created by the UN, which is currently made up of 2,719 NGO's that are utilized in consultative status (Alger, 2007).

The Centre for International Peace building defines peace building as “proactively building the conditions for a peaceful and just society” (Rapp, 2007, p.83). This particular article by Hilde Rapp, the director of the Centre for International Peacebuilding, states that there is an overlap in humanitarian efforts and peace building. Initially, humanitarian efforts are utilized in order to assist those that are no longer getting their basic needs met. Ms. Rapp believes that mindfulness and meditation are ways in which those can rebalance themselves and find peace in a situation lacking peace (Rapp, p. 85). Detailed key tasks from this agency state that in order for peace builders to help a community they must first diagnose what has happened and what is currently happening. She discusses what the options are for the evolution of a community and for there to be real change, and stabilization of the people (Rapp, p. 90). Making people feel safe is key to building peace in communities after conflict has taken place, according to Rapp. Community building as well as peace building allows the people to feel supported and a part of a group.

In Mneesha Gellman's article *World View in Peace Building: A Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Cambodia* (2010), she discusses the fact that peace building projects, although they can have many positive outcomes, can also have many negatives. This article looks at post conflict reconstruction projects in Cambodia. The negatives that are exhibited from international peacebuilders are the push of Western values, and rather than supporting and empowering local people their values are not considered. Although

the peacebuilders have excellent intentions, in many cases more harm is done in the society. NGO's are also dictated by their funding as to how the money is allocated, which is not always where the need is on the ground. In countries such as Cambodia communication and norms are quite different than that of a western society; therefore the intricacies of the needs of that specific culture are not always being met (Gellman, 2010). In the end, more conflict can be caused due to a lack of understanding and support of who the group is.

Peacebuilding is "Action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict. If sustained, cooperative work to deal with the underlying economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems that contribute to conflict" (King, 2005, p.905). Nicholas Sambanis and Michael Doyle performed a study on peace efforts after civil wars determining why some succeed and others fail. They found that the "peacebuilding triangle" explained 75% of successes and failures (Doyle, 2007, p. 2). The peacebuilding triangle has three vectors which are hostility, local capacity and international capacity. The more hostile the factions, the greater the casualties are. The poorer the country and more damage there is the more probability there is for looting of resources. The greater the international authority and peacekeeping presence there is the larger the reconstruction funding must be (Doyle).

In the short run, humanitarian and economic assistance do not seem to be much help in making peace last. They may allow people to last – preventing starvation – but equally often, they fuel more war, feed the armies and allow them to keep

fighting. In the long run, however economic development that builds on a stable security arrangement helps peace to last much longer (Doyle, 2007, p. 4).

In achieving peace both from international assistance and through the local authorities, the United Nations has developed four linked strategies which are peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and peace enforcement. Peacemaking relies on two elements, a peace treaty and that the process is not a passive one. Peacekeeping is neutrality, impartiality, consent and nonuse of force in the form of a mandate following the peace treaty. Reconstructive Peacebuilding consolidates internal and external security, strengthens political institutions and promotes economic and social reconstruction. Lastly, peace enforcement is the last step when all other UN missions have failed. In this phase law is imposed and force may be used (Doyle, 2007).

Peacebuilding has been emerging due to foreign peacekeeping being unable to sufficiently stabilize conflict and for the outcome of sustainable peace (Samuels, 2005). Sustainable post conflict peacebuilding requires transformation. The society must transform from a violent one to one that resolves conflict through dialogue. Reform of the governance framework is necessary to prevent future conflict and the creation of sustainable institutions (Samuels, 2005). According to Samuels “Transformation of a society from one that resorts to violence to one that resorts to political means to resolve conflict is a key requirement, which turns on elite negotiation, and widespread social dialogue and reconciliation” (Samuels, 2005, p. 732). Women are a key component in the transformational process of peace through cooperation, relationship building, and the nurturing of peacebuilding.

Women and Peacebuilding

Feminist peace theorists stress the security of women. According to Moola “Within the feminist framework, positive peace is defined as the absence of indirect or structural violence within various domains of society, economic structures, environment, political and democratic processes. Negative peace is the absence of personal, physical and direct violence, which includes unorganized, direct violence like child, spouse or partner abuse, rape and so on” (Moola, 2006, p. 124). According to the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, strategies toward positive peace include the following: the abolishment of discrimination toward women, reduction of poverty towards women, value recognition of women’s work, and equal employment and pay (Moola, 2006).

There is a need to advocate for women as an instrumental part of peacebuilding. Many times in wars women are utilized as a weapon of war through rape and torture and post conflict these women are either not accepted back into their communities or they are the only people left alive to rebuild the community for themselves and their family. Women are socialized from children to be peacemakers within their homes and communities. Ninety percent of victims of civil wars and internal conflicts are civilians, of which women and children are most affected (Moola, 2006). Women are exploited and affected by gender specific human rights violations during violent conflict. There is a lack of presence of women participating in elite led negotiations that impacts the socio-economic change and greatly affects the female population, which in turn creates sustainable peace. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 mandates

consideration of the impact of conflict on women's lives and the inclusion of women in peace talks; but the facts are that women are still being used in war crimes and their voice is limited (Marshall, 2008). Noble Peace Prize winner Jody Williams talks about sustainable peace and what it would take for it to exist. She states that there must be a transformation of the concept of security and violence and that security should be in terms of human being and not nation states (Marshall, 2008). Looking toward feminist theory in relation to peacebuilding is a natural affiliation as women are affected greatly in times of violence and war.

Feminist Theory

What is feminism? The first wave of feminism was interested in political and economic rights for women which resulted in women's suffrage. The second wave of feminism concerned itself with women's sexual oppression as well as challenged motherhood and marriage. The third wave of feminism in the 1980's looked at diversity issues in relations to feminist theory (Cudd & Andreasen, 2005). Due to the fact that my sample was all women I attempted to view the research in the context of women and peacebuilding and how feminist theory pertained to my study and peacebuilding in general. There was a common thread that the research illustrated that feminism and peace were synonymous with one another; and men and the concept of war, physical force and domination being another. According to Smith "Peace is only possible when female values of cooperation and concern for relationship are respected and used to negotiate conflict" (Smith, 1984, p. 33). Supporting the literature, utilizing conflict transformation as the building of relationships were important for the participants of this study with the

community that they were involved with in terms of peacebuilding. All participants discussed feeling connected to the communities that they were of service to and had ongoing communication and relationships that acted as a bridge for conflict and the community.

Part of feminist theory is dispelling the concept of the other, reducing threats and empowering one another. Feminism and peace are both in search of creating the absence of coercive power and all systems of domination (Warren, 1994). Women have been considered property, used as a weapon in war through rape and have been discarded and shamed by communities after atrocities have taken place. Sexual violence against women and the absence of peace have been a staple during war time. Women have lived through being invisible, discriminated against, harassed, treated as subhuman, and conquered throughout history. It is only natural that the proclivity of feminism and women would be toward peacebuilding for their own safety and survival. MacKinnon states “Feminism claims the voice of women’s silence, the sexuality of our eroticized desexualization, the fullness of lack, the centrality of marginality and exclusion, the public nature of privacy, the presence of our absence” (MacKinnon, 1983, p.639).

Simone de Beauvoir, in her writing of the *Second Sex* poses the concept of the other: a female who is occupying a secondary place that is not equal but instead a projection of what the self/subject rejects, which is voicelessness. In Simone de Beauvoir’s writing she discusses “Women exist only in the way in which the one/subject chooses to think of himself. In other words, women exist only as they are conceived by men; they have no existence in their own right” (De Beauvoir, 1980, p. 301). De

Beauvoir continues that for men women are sex, he is the absolute and she is the other; the stronger and the weaker. This concept of other was written in 1952 and yet in recent history the concept still remains. Women relate to the concept of other as they have always been the other. There is an imbalance in the male/female relationship. There is also a direct correlation as to what the community identity for women are in that region and time. That identity states what is acceptable in terms of the relationship with men in relation to women.

Rape used as a tool of war is seen as violence and a sexual violation. Rape is a man's act and being raped is a woman's experience; to be rapable defines what a woman is (MacKinnon, 1983). Masculinity is inherent in the state; the way that they govern, creating social order in the interest of men legitimizing male control over women's sexuality. In most societies men are dominant and have rule/law over women; the state institutionalizes male power (MacKinnon, 1983). Feminist theory is united with peace theory under the concept of less war and the creation of peaceful communities in which human rights are respected and there is equality for all citizens (Malsbury, 2009). Feminists agree that gender inequalities exist and that theoretical frameworks as well as political strategies must be in place for peace and equality.

Feminism exists for social change, in order to create a social revolution for women in changing their status, identity, and equality throughout time and space. It has challenged the norms and current realities of what was and decided that oppression of women was no longer a reality that should stay stagnant. In this research these women are empowering their communities; young girls and mothers alike. They are the changing the

possibilities in terms of survival and livelihood for the next day. Feminism is an act of peace.

Theories of Gandhi and Peace

The Gandhian perspective on peace is the lens in which I am viewing this research and the work of karma yogis. Gandhi believed that his life was his message, he chose to live how he believed peace should be mirrored in the world. He believed in sarvodaya, which is obtaining the good of all people; being able to serve all (Bose, 1981,). His beliefs were that we as humans should rediscover what is truly important as people and a society. Those values stemmed from a place of embracing love, peace and nonviolence. Gandhi envisioned a world in which we must rely and assist on one another for our own survival and our level of peace would be directly correlated to our interdependence. He saw karma yogis as the activist path, those that were the guardians of peace and giving. Service was thought to be true liberation: in meeting the needs of others, you are liberated spiritually and ethically (Allen, 2007).

According to Gandhi, love or nonviolence within ourselves are tenets of a peaceful society with the ultimate goal of us being in a place of total unity. Gandhi believed in a social revolution, one in which there was an improvement in the quality of life for all, for the collective as well as the individual (Bose, 1981). Gandhi's view is that the absolute truth is obtained through our own human perfection in which our own divine consciousness is awakened. Viewpoints were stated that "The task of human life for Gandhi is the very progress from human limitation toward the state of perfection through ceaseless striving" (Godrej, 2006, p. 291). This translates to the moral evolution of

people to be of service to each other and society as whole. A peace culture is “a mosaic of identities, attitudes, values, beliefs, and institutional patterns that lead people to live nurturantly with one another and the earth itself without the aid of structured power differentials, to deal creatively with their differences, and share their resources” (Perpipinan, 2000, p. 238).

Peace is a state of mind which an individual who chooses to be centered, calm and balanced exists. Peace may also be seen as being of service to others for the development of the greater good. In the Indian culture, a person who is at peace with themselves has a greater propensity of being a force of peace within their community (Kaur, 2005). Sikh Gurus were concerned about obtaining peace for all society; the welfare of all people.

The philosophies of yogis have permeated the field of conflict resolution and peace building for generations. The Maharishi Yogi who is the founder of the Transcendental Meditation program stated, “It is the accumulations of stress in the collective consciousness that predisposes society to go to war. When the level of stress becomes sufficiently great, it bursts out into large scale violence, war, and civil uprising necessitating military action” (Orme, Alexander, Davies, Chandler & Larimore, 1988, p. 777). In 1960, the Maharishi stated that if only one percent of the population practiced this meditation program, there would be a drastic change in how they conducted themselves in society. This program was used locally in communities, lowering the crime rates, then used in Jerusalem in which death and crime in general were both lowered (Orme, Alexander, Davies, Chandler & Larimore, 1988). Meditation is one of the limbs

of yoga, or dhyana, in which there is oneness in the universe. Yogis have used meditation as a form of nonviolence and peace since ancient times.

In the same spirit of the yogi philosophy, there was a study that synthesized the work of several NGO's which began to sponsor peace camps that invited young adults from conflict areas on both sides to have dialogue and create empathy for both parties in the conflict. It was found through this study that empathy is a key factor in movement for the conflicting parties (Malhotra & Liyanage, 2005). If empathy was not obtained, then the groups were less likely to change their positions and find common ground. In the field of peace studies, practicing empathy must be expressed in order to humanize the other side once again. Peace educators have stated that "peace consciousness is a code in which we communicate with ourselves and others, sending and receiving messages about respect for our unique humanity" (Bryzzheva, 2009, p 65). Peace consciousness is practiced just as peace itself is: through spiritual and mental work. This consciousness is utilized through those that exhibit empathy for others and are committed to being an advocate for peace.

Peace activism, which is essentially the main component of the karma yogi, looks at the shared meaning that causes the conflict and then proceeds to repair the damages from the conflict (Sarrica & Contarello, 2004). A research project called "Hidden Voices" was started in 2003 that illustrated women participating in the peace process within conflict areas. This study interviewed grassroots peace workers in order to raise awareness for women and the community of peace building. Similar to my proposed research on the karma yogi, the researchers of this study wanted to explore the drive of

these women to make a difference in this profound way. The themes in this research were relationships, approaches to sustainable peace and transformation (Jordan, 2003). The differences between this and my research are that not only am I looking to understand the essence of the karma yogi, but I am hoping to uncover the evolution of the collective identity of the community that are aided in these endeavors. In this movement how are they impacting the lives of those they are reaching? Yogis are a new sect of peace builders, working through activism, funding, international outreach, and mobilization of programs internationally that are transforming the lives of people in conflict and post conflict situations. In analyzing the essence of the karma yogi, human needs theory is examined in terms of the basic needs of the community as well as the possibility of self-actualization within the karma yogi.

Community Building and Activism

Individuals in a community must feel a sense of shared values and support in order for there to be balance and mutual needs being met. There must be a commitment to the group, resources must be protected, work should be abundant, and skills should be honed all in an environment that is without fear and a feeling of safety. The community should have an open dialogue as to what is acceptable and what is not.

The definition offered by the United Nations for volunteering and altruism is, “Be it understood as mutual aid and self-help, philanthropy and service, or civic participation and campaigning, voluntary action is an expression of people’s willingness and capacity to freely help others and improve society” (Lacey & Ilcan, 2006, p. 35). Activities that

were once run by the state are now in the hands of volunteers and activists. Through volunteering we allow for change and ultimately the evolution of a community or society.

Volunteering in developing countries was an outgrowth of missionaries dating back to the third century in northern Africa. Today people choose to volunteer either for altruism or self-centric motivations. People either want to make a difference and contribute in a way that is lasting for a group of people or to have a new experience of delving into a new culture and way of being. Typically, people work within emergency relief, community development, conflict resolution, and poverty alleviation (Palmer, 2002). People who volunteer overseas often are never alone, have compromising health conditions, become frustrated with the overall situation and can feel very isolated even though surrounded by this new world (Palmer). There are many more people who have chosen this experience in the twenty first century, having an understanding of various international landscapes, and contributing worldwide. Community building and activism are directly correlated to humanitarian endeavors and the concept of peacebuilding in developing countries that are most affected by disaster, war or political instability.

Humanitarian Endeavors

Peacebuilding and humanitarian movements are integrating their efforts; many peacebuilding programs are funded by humanitarian agencies. International assistance amounts to 100 billion a year from the UN, foundations and other community based organizations. The goal of this industry is to alter change in the economic, social, and political arena in developing countries. Development allows for long term assistance in building a country's infrastructure while humanitarian aid is there for the purpose of

saving lives and of assisting the aftermath of tragedy (Zelizer, 2013). Humanitarian relief is guided by crisis response, while development fosters stability and growth.

Humanitarian action should be guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, meaning the centrality of saving human lives and alleviating suffering wherever it is found; impartiality, meaning the implementation of actions solely on the basis of need, without discrimination between or within affected populations; neutrality, meaning that humanitarian action must not favor any side in an armed conflict or other dispute where such action is carried out; and independence, meaning the autonomy of humanitarian objectives from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is implemented (Zelizer, 2013, p. 78).

There are many types of humanitarian work. Relief work is guided by providing shelter, clothing and anything else for survival. Restorative work includes conflict resolution and peacebuilding. General humanitarian action raises awareness about issues, preventative work analyzes possible crisis and protective humanitarian functions seek basic order and nonviolence (Alger, 2007). Humanitarian projects assist states with their national interests and identity and assist in linking coalitions amongst organizations and the military (Weiss, 2001).

Global relief efforts, including humanitarian aid, are broadcasted and televised for the world to see what each group and state have contributed and all those whom have not. NGOs and the government are clamoring for the same pool of money when disaster, such as the tsunami in Sri Lanka, strikes. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in Sri Lanka

stated that the NGOs which surfaced during their disaster were considered saviors, but in essence the organizations had a political agenda to the West (Fernswando & Hilhorst, 2006). The aid that the government expected to receive in order to take care of their own countrymen was taken from them by NGOs.

From the perspective of the NGOs, their political neutrality is sometimes maneuvered against them from the very populations that caused the suffering (Leebaw, 2007, p. 223). Leebaw stated “The humanitarian movement defined impartiality in pragmatic terms, as a space apart from political conflict, designated to provide aid to the suffering without provoking the hostility of the combatants” (Leebaw, 2007, p. 224). During the 1990s NGOs decided not only to provide relief but delve into the deeper rooted conflicts within regions which also made them have shared interests with states, thereby throwing themselves into the political arena. Many humanitarian agencies have been worried that their standards were compromised and that their agencies would fall corrupt (Barnett, 2005). There is a natural evolution between the level of impact that these organizations make and how entrenched they are on the political side. The more roles that humanitarian groups take on, the more they take on the conflict within the country.

Humanitarian intervention is the idea that people can be saved from their current situation, and although those in the field are meant to be neutral, there are many times vested interests in those being persecuted who are in need. This lack of neutrality to some is considered to lack moral authority and effectiveness (Archibugi, 2004). Humanitarian NGOs advocate in their work for neutrality, impartiality and independence. This means

that sides should not be taken in a conflict, aid should be given solely on need, and governments do not influence decision making (Lischer, 2007). In instances where aid workers and the military work in conjunction due to safety precautions and the risky nature of the conflict, neutrality is more difficult (Lischer). Even with the best intentions for humanitarian aid workers, there are significant political implications. MacFarlane concluded “In the abstract, the rights of the victim and the obligations of others to help are paramount but many argue that evaluation of humanitarian action must focus not merely on motive but also on consequence, including unintended consequence” (MacFarlane, 1999, p. 539). At times humanitarian action can assist one side while hindering another, as well as strengthen socially unjust power relations in societies (MacFarlane).

The role of the yogi in regards to humanitarian affairs is newer and therefore their intentions and principles are not yet as convoluted with the governing bodies of the state and their needs. As time progresses and these organizations become larger with more funding sources the demands on them and their allegiance will presumably shift as well. The research on yogis as humanitarian ambassadors at this point is an unspoiled area with an unfiltered view with the ideal of assisting the community without political entanglements. Humanitarian assistance is either derived from the United Nations, Red Cross, private donors, military, government agencies, and NGOs. Although the karma yoga only takes up a small percentage within the humanitarian world, their impact is potentially changing people’s lives internationally. As stated above, some of these groups

are affiliated with the United Nations but at this point, most get their funding from private citizens.

McMaster University and the World Health Organization have made a list of links to peace and humanitarian efforts in relation to health. They believe that pursuing common interests brings protagonists together, extends altruism, replaces rumors and confront stereotypes, generates a sense of shared identity and actions by healthcare professionals and negotiations/mediations (Kapila, 2007, p.21). In humanitarian efforts as well as peace building divisions the concept and mentality of ‘us versus them’ must be eradicated. The community must feel connected and supported by one another and society must be viewed as just and fair.

Human Needs Theory

Abraham Maslow looked to see what motivated people as a group. He believed that we are all motivated by certain factions and once one had been met we looked to fulfill the next one. His model is a pyramid of needs, with the bottom portion being physiological, which includes shelter, sleep, and food; next is safety, which includes security and stability; then social which includes love, friendship, and connection; esteem, which is about achievement and respect; and finally self-actualization, which is seeking personal growth and self-fulfillment through peak experiences. Becoming self-actualized is rare as well as a continual process. This model illustrated that “Maslow identified self-actualizing people as individuals who are highly creative, who have peak experiences, and who are able to resolve the dichotomies inherent in opposite contraries such as those constituted by freedom and determinism, the conscious and unconscious as

well as intentionality and a lack of intentionality” (Olson, 2013). Within this study, most of the participants experienced what they stated were peak experiences that were outside of their everyday lives and existence.

John Burton views human needs from a conflict perspective as an emergent collection of human development essentials that have no hierarchical order. Burton argues that the root causes of conflict are people not willing to meet their unmet needs on an individual or societal level. From the conflict resolution perspective, basic human needs theory avails to permitting conflict resolvers to distinguish between needs based conflict and interest based conflict and to modify behavior accordingly. It also allows for designing and redesigning the resolution process according to the underlying needs. In essence, this theory allows conflict resolution to view what the unsatisfied needs are and what methods would be needed to accommodate individuals and groups.

An article by Ervin Staub looks at what it takes for groups and people to care about and promote others’ welfare. He poses the question “What are the cultural, social, and psychological requirements for a peaceful world that nourishes the human spirit and helps individuals develop their personal and human potential” (Staub, 2003, p. 1). He examines the basic needs perspective that allows for a culture of peace. This perspective states that we all have shared needs. When our needs are satisfied, there is growth. “To create a nonviolent, caring world, to create goodness, it is essential to extend the boundaries of us” (Staub, 2003, p. 5). The more we humanize the other, the more the collective has their basic needs met. The more we are of service to each other the more peace building and conflict resolution methods are readily being employed. The highest

functioning of us as humans is when our basic needs are met. Our basic needs are integrally connected to our identity; in how we perceive ourselves and how others perceive us. When our basic needs are not met, our identity changes.

Identity Theory

The karma yogis' identities were analyzed during their time abroad in post conflict regions when they themselves might be in harm's way and in service to others. Burke defines "An identity is the set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person" (Burke, 2009, p. 3). This research is looking to have a greater understanding of the impact of the collective group identity within the community on the individual identity of the karma yogi. A collective identity has two main components, the content and contestation. The content illustrates the meaning of the collective identity which have four forms: constitutive norms, social purposes, relational comparisons, and cognitive models. Constitutive norms are the rules within a group, social purposes are the goals of the group, relational comparisons are how the group compares themselves to other groups, and the cognitive models are the worldview of the group. The second component, contestation, involves that the content can be contested and is always changing. (Abdelal, 2009). Collective identities have shared interpretations from all that is in the group. In being part of a collective identity not only are you able to have the identity of activist, humanitarian, or peace builder, but there is also a portion of self-interest in that the identity of the activist which achieves a satisfaction for a desirable self (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). Does the yogi

create this identity out of moral obligation or is it out of self-interest for ego and sense of self-worth? Polletta and Jasper's article *Collective Identity and Social Movements* (2001) stated that collective identities are based out of a need for one's personal identity. I am not convinced that all collective identities have the same motivations and personal interests of self as others do. As the identity of the yogi unfolded through the research it was clear that their shift in identity was authentic and that the collective identity of the community certainly did shift the personal identity of the yogi.

In investigating the collective consciousness of foreign yogi peace builders, I was searching for the shared meaning that they have with one another regardless of which region of the world they were doing their work within. Morton Prince wrote, "Collective consciousness is the unity of thought, those common ideals and common will which take possession of the soul of a people" (Prince, 1917, p. 288). The social consciousness of a group shows the ideals of the group as a whole, what their values are, and how they conduct their lives. A nation or community has a collective consciousness; an energy and is that community shifted by the yogi? The collective consciousness of these groups did in fact alter the karma yogis, changes in their lives were implemented due to this and from their point of view the communities did have a positive impact.

Brewer dictated that "Social identity provides a link between the psychology of an individual – the representation of self – and the structure and process of social groups within which the self is embedded" (Brewer, p. 115). Social identity theory was founded by Henri Tajfel in 1979 and its roots were in social categorization. Abdelal stated that "The idea here is that people quickly divide and easily divide themselves and others into

basic categories” (Abdelal, 2009, p. 347). Social identity theory states that people define their identities by being a member in a group and through personal identity (Howard, p. 369). There are four variations in the area of social identity: person based social identity, relational social identity, group based social identity, and collective identities. Person based social identities are the individual’s sense of self that are affected by membership in groups. Relational social identities are also based on the individual but they exist through the relationship to others. This identity would be yogi to survivor, the interpersonal relationship between the two and how that affects the individual. Group based social identities is the lens of how you see yourself as a member of the group, it is a “we” identity. Collective identities are the whole of the group’s efforts and achievements in a collective form (Brewer, 2001). The identity of the karma yogi was important in relation to the area of peace building and conflict transformation in terms of how this research will be viewed in the future.

Summary

Throughout this research the main question is what is the lived experience of karma yogis as international peacebuilders? Within this question theories of Gandhian peace are explored as well as identity of the yogi peace builder. This research delves into the areas of conflict transformation and women as peace builders. Human Needs Theory is being addressed when asking what it means to be an international karma yogi and recognizing the need for survival, community and relationships. Identity theory is useful in viewing the shifts that the yogis were making during the process of humanitarian work and peace building while they reflected on being of service to the survivors. In essence

the theories supported the research that was found and within the themes that were created during the interview process.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Qualitative Tradition

Qualitative research is interactive, descriptive, and establishes rapport with participants. Qualitative researchers attempt to understand the subject matter through interpretative practices. There is an intimate relationship between the qualitative researcher and their inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The qualitative researcher plays the role of the observer turning their observations into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. Qualitative researchers are attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p.5).

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

Qualitative procedures were chosen due to the fact that the information that was gathered is interpretative in nature and the study was shaped by inquiry/interview (Creswell, 2003). My research design is a qualitative methodology that utilized the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis approach. This particular approach is interested in what takes place during a lived experience that is significant for people (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012). Through this research I gathered “meanings” of the universal experiences of karma yogis in developing countries (Creswell, 2007, p. 58). I had determined that interpretive phenomenological analysis was best suited because I was in search of deep meaning and awareness for answers to my research. In this study I analyzed a new generation of peacebuilders through the yoga community. Can yoga be used as a tool for conflict resolution? In many programs illustrated above in the literature

review it already is being done. I wanted to be able to research the essence of the karma yogi and understand how they were so successful at evolving consciousness one community at a time. I was intrigued by the experience of karma yogis and their role in conflict resolution and the world.

This research provided a foundation for both the humanitarian and peace building community to validate karma yogis as a real entity in the field that are contributing in ways that are rich and far-reaching. In addition, there is inherent meaning generated by this research in the yoga community for broadening the scope of those that are willing to take part in this movement and join karma yogis in helping those across our borders. This creates a new population for people who never had the knowledge that they too could be on the front lines of peace in countries with conflict.

IPA looks to examining the larger significance. The phenomenological component is guided by Edmund Husserl who is concerned with exploring the experience rather than fixing the experience. The interpretative component is hermeneutic in nature. IPA shares the view that human beings are sense-making creatures, as well as recognizing that access to experience is always dependent on what participants tell us about that experience, and that the researcher then needs to interpret that account from the participant in order to understand their experience (Smith, 2012, p. 3).

The important concept of the hermeneutic circle discusses that to fully understand the part you must understand the whole; the meaning is attached to the whole. The final component is idiographic which is concerned with the details, which allows for thorough analysis. As a result, the sample is small and purposively chosen. It is observing

the perspective of the individual's experience. My research questions were asking: what the lived experiences, the essence, and the identity of humanitarian yogis in developing countries were, and how that affected peace building efforts in those regions. My main research question was: What is the lived experience of karma yogis as international peacebuilders? My sub-questions were the following: What does it mean to be an international karma yogi? What are the experiences of international karma yogis? What is the identity of the international karma yogi?

The father of phenomenology was Edmund Husserl in the 1800's:

He was particularly interested in finding a means by which someone might come to accurately know their own experience of a given phenomenon, and would do so with a depth and rigor which might allow them to identify the essential qualities of that experience. If this could be done, then Husserl reasoned that these essential features of an experience would transcend the particular circumstances of their appearance, and might then illuminate a given experience for others too (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012, p. 12).

Hermeneutic phenomenology was initially guided by Martin Heidegger.

Heidegger stated that each encounter is interpreted based the person's background and history (Lavery, 2003). Husserl was more concerned about the psychological underpinnings while Heidegger was looking at existence itself in regard to the relationship of meaning. Hans-Georg Gadamer was influenced by the works of Husserl and Heidegger. Gadamer viewed interpretations as horizons, which is your range of

vision from your point of view. Heidegger, as well as Gadamer found bracketing (epoche) to be impossible, which is primarily what differed in the works of Husserl.

I focused on the later work of Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) who continued their focus on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. IPA is not predefined; the experience is defined in a way that is less rigid. The ordinary experiences are illuminated in IPA and the significance of the experience is analyzed. In this Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, I constructed a full interpretative description of the yogis' peace building lives. The philosophies and framework of Smith, Flowers & Larkin guided the methodology for this research. Jonathan Smith started this approach in 1996 and it was centered in the field of psychology.

Data Collection

My sample, which was purposive and intentional, was comprised of three participants who were all yogis who have done humanitarian work in developing countries as a karma yoga. Each participant had met a specific criteria guided by the study. Participants had at least worked in one developing country in a humanitarian role for at least 6 months. All participants were invited by the researcher to participate in this study and were well known yogis in the field of karma yoga. The sampling was purposive and snowballing. Three people are a typical sample size for an interpretative phenomenological analysis study. Due to the small number of karma yogi's in general, a smaller sample size was appropriate for this study. Smith, Flowers and Larkin the creators of IPA state "The issue is quality, not quantity, and given the complexity of most human phenomena, IPA studies usually benefit from a concentrated focus on a small

number of cases.” (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, p.51, p 2012). The primary concern of IPA is with a detailed account of individual experience”. All participants were female due to the fact that the population of yogis is a predominately female group with the ages being 25 and older. All yogis selected for this study were fluent in English and have the United States as their country of origin.

Since I had chosen an interpretative phenomenological analysis, all data collection was engineered through extensive ninety minute to two hour long interviews with each participant. I asked for a second interview in order for elaboration, clarification and member checking for thirty to sixty minutes. Please see the interview questions that were chosen for this study for both the first and second interview within the Appendix A. Before any interviews took place, all participants signed informed consent forms and were informed about confidentiality. This interview process was necessary to obtain meaning from each participant and was completed while being recorded. All interviews were telephonic due to the various locations of participants; there were no local participants. All recordings were downloaded onto my hard drive and password protected. I journaled thoughts as the participants were answering all questions. I used my own personal experiences as a starting point in order to be as objective as possible. Member-checking was a part of this study and the participants had an opportunity to review their first interview to expand or clarify as well as add any additional insights that they had in the second interview. I hired a professional transcriptionist to transcribe all interviews. All transcriptions were verbatim and I have a transcript showing all words spoken for each participant. All transcripts had large margins for coding. A narrative

account was written for each case, in which the researchers' interpretation was presented as well as verbatim extracts from each participant as described by Smith (2012, p, 4). The limitations of this proposed study, as in any IPA, are continual self-checking and the aspect of a small sampling of people that might know one another. It was a homogenous sample, which is preferable, as convergences and divergences will be analyzed.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns in qualitative research review the complexity of researching participant's lives while ensuring anonymity for the subject and their story. This research went through the extensive process of the Institutional Review Board protocol through Nova Southeastern University. Once the research was approved the researcher contacted the participants for their voluntary involvement and consent in this study. All informed consent forms were approved through the Institutional Review Board. Consent was obtained from the participants in writing. The participants were notified about the details of the study and what their role would be within this research. Participants were guaranteed confidentiality within this study and that pseudonyms would be used within the research. During the interview process all participants were able to review the transcripts in order for them to feel as though they were represented in a way that they wanted their information displayed. All documents and files were located on a password protected computer and all physical files were within a locked cabinet. The participants were notified that all members of the dissertation committee would have access to all documents pertaining to the study. All three participants signed the informed consent paperwork and agreed to all subject matter and questions within the research study.

Data Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is analytic in nature in making sense of the experiences of the participants. As dictated in *IPA Theory, Method and Research* by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2012), these are the following steps for data analysis. The first step was reading and re-reading the transcripts as well as listening to the audio recording. The second step was initial noting. This step was exploratory and noted every detail of interest, while making notes on the transcripts. There were no rules in this section other than to be comprehensive. The key concerns were phenomenological in nature and were focusing on relationships and the meaning for the participants. Comments were either descriptive, linguistic or conceptual.

The third step was developing emergent themes. This step looked to reduce the amount of detail and analyze discrete chunks of transcript. The main task in turning notes into themes involved creating concise statements which represented the psychological essence of the work. The themes then illustrated the participant's original words and the analyst's interpretation. The fourth step was searching for connections across emergent themes. This involved developing a mapping of how the analyst believes it all fits together. Some emergent themes were discarded, as will be discussed below. Themes were moved to form clusters of related themes. The clusters were named, differences were analyzed, frequency was noted, and a table was formed. The fifth step was moving to the next case which is the next participant and starting the process once again. This was done for each participant. The sixth and final step was looking for patterns across all cases. Each table was arranged in a way that I could visually find connections, and note

the differences. Ultimately I was reviewing what themes were the most powerful based on the transcriptions. The final result was in the form of a graph.

By following the guidelines of Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) and also utilizing my own specific methods, I was detailing the exact analysis that took place during my research. I had a total of six transcripts from the three participants that I interviewed. The first transcript of each participant ranged from 22 to 32 pages and the second transcript for each participant ranged from 12 to 16 pages for each participant. As I received each transcript I read and reread each line, continually going through each transcript. I was committed to bracketing my thoughts while reading the transcripts and finding the participant's truth amongst all of the pages versus my preconceived notions. I left margins on both the left and right side of the transcripts. On the left side of the transcripts I began my initial noting. These were all exploratory comments, attempting to gauge what was important to the participants about their experiences in the developing country. I wanted to know what mattered to them, why they felt the way they did, as well as how they got to that point of feeling that particular way. I was interested in their changes and evolution through their own journey.

In exploring each transcript, I investigated the language that they used, and as I went line by line I continually asked what their words meant. Initially I went through the transcripts looking for any key phrases and all descriptive comments were written in blue pen. Then I looked for tone, pauses, laughter, any meaning that was above and beyond words, these linguistic comments were all coded in black pen, and finally all of my conceptual comments, my questioning was written in red. In the next step, I developed

my emergent themes; at this point there was exponentially more data due to the noting that had taken place. Although I still viewed the transcripts I mostly fixated on the notes and I was looking to map the patterns. As I studied these comments and questions I then turned them into statements or themes. I took large areas of content and divided them into themes that made sense to the essence of what the participants were conveying to me.

At this stage I searched for connections across the emergent themes for each participant individually. I had created a table for each participant for all of their emergent themes to organize more clearly for myself. Before these themes were placed in a table, some were discarded as they were not as relevant to my initial research question. Themes were moved to form clusters that were quite similar to one another. Abstraction, which is a way of identifying patterns between the emergent themes in order to form superordinate themes, was used. These clusters were now named and became the superordinate themes. This took place for each participant.

Patterns were analyzed across each case (each participant). Each participant now had a table of all of their superordinate themes. All tables were printed out physically next to each other so that I could visually see the connections and patterns across the cases. I was interested to see which themes were the most potent, and where the most overlap was. Once I analyzed that thoroughly, a master table was formed that illustrated the connections for the group as a whole not only in regards to the words of the participants and my interpretations but also linking to my research questions. Finally, the superordinate themes were merged, as well as the subthemes that conveyed the essence of

all three participants appropriately and accurately. This was a very in-depth and intricate process that collected data for the experiences of international karma yogis.

Other Studies

Other phenomenological studies all displayed the same quest for deep meaning that my proposed study did, but focused on other areas. The Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology in 1997 looked at *The Relationship Between Touch and Talk in the Bodywork Treatment of Female Rape Victims*. This phenomenology explored the lived experience of body workers who have clients with trauma such as rape survivors. Ten therapists were participants in the study. All interviews were audiotaped, the information was transcribed, and themes were organized. The themes that prevailed were that the body workers all let the rape survivor guide any dialogue around the incident, talk was thought of being used as a tactic to disconnect further from their body, all body workers could sense the trauma in the body without verbal dialogue and that there were clear patterns in which trauma survivors hold tension in their bodies.

All phenomenological and IPA studies are about creating a deep understanding of the lived experience of a group of people. In 1999 at the University of Alberta, there was a study on *The Personal Meanings of Peacefulness*. This study delved into the phenomenon of peacefulness in an attempt to understand how moments of peace are experienced. There were 12 people in this study who were all solicited through word of mouth, postings, and personal invitations. The qualifier was that the individual must have had experienced peacefulness at some point in their lives. This interview process was audiotaped and transcribed. The themes that prevailed were rhythm of accord, promise in

peace, inner rejuvenation, sweet surrender in peace, kinship in peace and window to eternity. This study was the first IPA that looked at the relationship between the community of yoga and peacebuilding.

Summary

This qualitative interpretative phenomenological analysis researched the lived experience of three international peacebuilding karma yogis. All procedures were followed according to Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) in relation to the three semi structured interviews, data analysis and collection. Ethical considerations were followed and taken seriously for the integrity of the study and the anonymity of the participant. The research illustrated the lived experiences and meaning that was created from these participants through utilizing an IPA methodology.

Chapter 4: Results

Overview

This chapter illuminates the lived experience of karma yogis as international peacebuilders. The purpose of this research was to understand karma yogis as international peacebuilders and to examine the social identity of the karma yogi. The narratives capture the lived experience of karma yogis as international peacebuilders. It was crucial to understand who international yogis are as a group of peacebuilders in order to reflect on the impact that they make within the field of peace studies and conflict resolution. The main question that this research was inquiring was what was the lived experience of karma yogis as international peacebuilders? This study addressed what it looked like for a yogi to be a peacebuilder in developing countries. It examined the multitude of roles that an international karma yogi had and the impact on their identity while being of service. This research shares intimate stories of the life of an international karma yogi, the experiences that they had, and their identity that was shaped on their path of service.

There were four superordinate themes and fifteen subthemes identified in this analysis. The themes all reflected the essence of the lived experience of karma yogis. Understanding the lived experience of karma yogis as international peacebuilders revealed the true essence of this group of these participants. The superordinate themes revealed in this analysis were defining the path of peacebuilder, interpreting the impact of the international karma yogi, reviewing the life of service as an international karma yogi

and reflecting on the identity of an international karma yogi. The superordinate themes and subthemes are shown in Figure 1: Superordinate Themes and Subthemes.

Table 1

Superordinate Themes and Subthemes

Defining the path of a peacebuilder

Identifying a life of balance through a mind-body-spirit connection
 Addressing transformation of the peacebuilder
 Understanding the interconnectedness of the peacebuilder and the community
 Learning about the life of the yogi before they were a yogi

Interpreting the impact of the international karma yogi

Understanding the social impact of the international karma yogi
 Recognizing relationships of yogis and community
 Addressing survival, need and conflict

Reviewing the life of service as an international karma yogi

Reflecting on being of service to trauma survivors and conflict
 Advocating being a humanitarian
 Reflecting on being of service in a region of conflict
 Recognizing the identity shift of the yogi pre and post service work

Reflecting on the identity of an international karma yogi

Addressing heart based living
 Leading international yoga/service travel
 Reflecting on teaching yoga in developing countries
 Understanding breath work and meditation

The Participants - A Descriptive Summary

This section summarizes the population or sample characteristics and demographics of the participants. All three participants/yogis met the inclusion criteria: they were all U.S. citizens, had spent at least 6 months or more in a developing country in the capacity of a peacebuilder/humanitarian, and they were practicing yogis. Pseudonyms were used in place of the participants' names, and all people/organizations that they named were unnamed due to the confidential nature of these interviews in areas that are still in conflict. All participants and those named are ensured complete confidentiality.

Yogi A

Yogi A had been volunteering locally for years and eventually started volunteering internationally. She was a yoga teacher in New York City who realized that she wasn't fulfilled and decided to shift her focus to use yoga in the volunteer world. Prior to being a yoga teacher, Yogi A worked in the creative world for various Public Relation firms. For 18 years she was working in art direction and event planning as well as doing graphic design and event styling. Yogi A freelanced so there was time to explore and take on other pursuits. Yogi A decided to work with sexually assaulted women but the opportunities in New York were minimal due to there being many organizations that already helped this population. She began testing the waters with international organizations and their feedback was very receptive. Yogi A was asked to teach mental health workers yoga so that they could use it in their rehabilitative process. Within two months of starting the process Yogi A started her first international karma yogi mission in developing countries and started an organization in New York City.

Yogi A has been of service in developing countries as a karma yogi since 2009 in Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, and Sri Lanka. Yogi A has been a karma yogi for trauma survivors; mostly child soldiers, children in orphanages, sexually assaulted girls and street boys through partnering with organizations on the ground in these countries. Through Yogi A's organization she has developed a 40-hour program for counselors which is her toolkit for trauma in yoga, breathing exercises, and somatic body awareness. This is her service to the world.

Yogi B

Before Yogi B became a karma yogi, she had a lifelong journey of polar opposites in bringing balance into her life. She has a Bachelor's degree in Apparel Management and for 10 years was in executive management positions for corporate companies of women's apparel for Latin America and Canadian markets. Yogi B began her career in the clothing industry due to her stepmother being in this industry. The more meditation and yoga that was done she realized that there was a higher calling for her to live a life that was guided by her truth. Yogi B searched for something more meaningful and that was connected to the earth, so in 2002 she took a sabbatical and went to Australia to complete a nine-month yoga teacher training program. Yogi B went back to her home town and taught yoga for 12 years. From there Yogi B took a trip to Peru to trek through the Andes and it changed her life. Her heart opened and she knew that her calling was to be of service to the orphaned and abandoned children of Peru. Yogi B connected with organizations in Peru and started her work of service to children and started a nonprofit organization in 2011.

Yogi B has assisted several organizations in Peru through being an international karma yogi and is now working on a social enterprise which is more of the journey aspect bringing educational leadership training, children's service trips and transformational journeys to Peru. Yogi B has spent 80 percent of the last four years living and being of service in Peru.

Yogi C

Yogi C, before teaching yoga had many careers within public relations, the entertainment industry, fundraising, and taught English in Japan. Yogi C has been teaching yoga for about 12 years. After teaching yoga, she explained that she just connected to people on a much deeper level that was heartfelt. In yoga she had a voice. Yogi C was leading luxury trips to Bali, Costa Rica and Hawaii. It was an opportunity for people to really give back and nourish themselves, but really just about honoring oneself. In 2010 when the earthquake hit Haiti she began her international karma yogi work there. Yogi C's whole life changed. She has worked with many organizations in Haiti and with locals. Yogi C has her own company and through her company she has led 12 trips to Haiti as well as to Peru, Mexico, Bali, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic. Each trip is partially about being a karma yogi; being of service as well as a yoga component.

Yogi C's organization is partnered with several charities and service organizations in order to commit to their efforts of being humanitarians. There are many organizations in Haiti that Yogi C is partnered with on the ground mostly with their target population being women and children.

Superordinate Themes and Subthemes

The yogis who were a part of this research were all entrenched in the regions that they choose to be peacebuilders within and although the areas were quite diverse, the experiences certainly overlapped for these three participants. The four superordinate themes represent the lived experience of karma yogis as international peacebuilders, and the patterns and connections between the emergent subthemes.

Superordinate Theme: Defining the Path of a Peacebuilder

Examining the path of the peacebuilder exhibited that there was a calling. There was a greater need to make a difference in a particular population's life and that life before being an international peacebuilder for them was not as rewarding as life after they spent time in developing countries as a karma yogi. All three yogis had a transformation of who they were prior to being a yogi and were transformed as peacebuilders even if some of them did not see themselves as a peacebuilder. Yogi A was connected to a cause while Yogi B and C were connected not only to the cause but also to the land and the people.

Identifying a life of balance through a mind-body-spirit connection. Analysis of the transcripts revealed that karma yogis identified a life of balance through a mind-body-spirit connection as international peacebuilders. Yogi A thought that to be a yogi meant being open and being aware in her mind. Yogi A describes what being a yogi means to her, stating:

Practice what you preach basically. It just means being open and being aware in my mind. So much of my practice now is often that and so it's those things that

you learn about yourself, your impulses or what you know, what your instinctual impulses are when you're in a negative situation or a stressful situation and knowing that you are ok. I need to take a breath or I need to step away from this, or knowing how to set boundaries. So it's about knowing how to nourish yourself by being aware of what your tendencies are (Yogi A, Page 3, Line 95-103).

Yogi B explained that to be a yogi, to her, was a path of courage to do the work and show up for herself with authenticity. Thus, what was felt and what defined herself were the mirrors of all the beautiful people around her, feeling her own energy, stating:

I am touched and emotional at the moment thinking of all the beautiful mirrors that I've had show me my own might. From when they look at me and they see me or they feel me. That means that I've done the work, and I show up as authentic and true as I can. Then I can be felt in a way that might not be measurable in the normal sense, but it's as powerful as I can imagine. My body defines my shape and my skin, and the blood, and my heart, and the pulse of my blood flowing through my body. That defines me in a shape and a solid way and then on another level, it's an energy. It is an energy that is felt by others when I do my inner work, and I allow with courage, a deep healing to take place, whether I need to go deep into some sorrow or grief or pain within me. It takes courage to be true and honest with our experience and our emotions and our energy and our bodies, to allow those to pass but they have to be felt (Yogi B, Page 19, Line 833-854).

Yogi C thought that in yoga she felt connected to every aspect of it: meditation, asana, and the breathing, it was one wonderful package. Yoga brought Yogi C home to her heart and uplifted her. Yogi C stated she has become much more open and receptive to the needs of others and has let go of a lot of judgments. She explained, “I just have a deeper understanding of how people are often just shaped by their circumstances and they act or react a certain way because of their circumstances. A karma yogi is dynamic, thoughtful, giving, empowered, compassionate, open-hearted, a visionary, caring, nurturing and has perseverance” (Yogi C, Page 12 Line 543-549, Interview 2, Yogi C, Page 2, Line 55-68).

Addressing transformation of the peacebuilder. Karma yogis addressed the idea of transforming into a peacebuilder. For all three karma yogis, peace was integrated with balance and having confidence. There seemed to be a gradual process for the yogis that they developed, first a yoga practice in their hometown, and soon after they wanted more; to be of service internationally. Yogi A captures the complexity of this when she says:

Peace is just really for me, it's changeable you know? For me peace is just balance I guess and having personally having confidence that your motivations are right. Your heart is in the right place. You have the skill set to support whatever project or thing is happening and just being at peace in that. You've done your due diligence and you are out there doing it and if things go wrong or something happens, there's no control over that it's sort of acceptance in a way. (Yogi A, Page 20, Line 907-918). I think, at the most basic level, it's about peace

within yourself, and then starting baby steps, starting with peace within your family and your tribe and your neighborhood, your community. Then, I think you can think larger, but I think it starts very small. (Interview #2, Yogi A, Page 4, Line 180-184).

Yogi A went on to say that many elements must be in place for there to be peace.

According to Yogi A, there must be security, absence of war and in each community what it needs to thrive will differ. Peace is not permanent, it is moment to moment and that is part of what needs to be taken in to consideration as the peacebuilder.

Yogi B examined her thoughts on transforming into a peacebuilder and looked within. Yogi B's inner work was a reflection of her outer work. It was the inner work that Yogi B had to start with, to embody and know, stating that the microcosm is a reflection of a macrocosm. Doing that inner soul work, knowing our truth, meditating, taking the time to be quiet or be in nature, or do our practices, allows us to be that peace and representation of what is outside. It is the inner work that we have to start with to then embody and know what we are doing in order to radiate out with clarity, sincerity and humility to the world (Yogi B, Page 19, Line 858-866).

Yogi B discussed what being a peacebuilder in Peru looked and felt like for her: It started with me wanting to help the children. I do have some acceptance that I would have liked to raise more money or do more things, or achieve more of my goals for them. What has happened is the most genuine, warm love of family meals in their homes, whether there is dirt floors, it is the real relationships that I have that are just so heart-connected and so genuine, that they're so powerful, and

there is so much peace and love with that, and so much shared joy with that work (Yogi B, Page 20, Line 881-896).

After Yogi C started teaching yoga, she connected with people on a much deeper and heartfelt level. Yogi C genuinely cared about their health and well-being and how she could uplift their lives and spirits. Yogi C found her niche, because she has always been very optimistic, upbeat and lighthearted. Yogi C stated it as the following: “Peace equates to regardless of what is happening in your life that you still find calm within your heart, whether there is chaos or a disturbance, you can still take inhales and exhales and find that sense of benevolence from within” (Yogi C, Page 5-6, Line 229-232). As far as the role of a peacebuilder, Yogi C stated she never envisioned herself in those terms before but instead saw herself as a yogi with a heart, but decided that she will now reconsider how she views herself as a peacebuilder.

Yogi C stated,

In transforming as a peacebuilder one of the most invaluable lessons that I learned is that as Westerners we don't go to a developing country needing or wanting to do things the Western way, and that it is really important to honor the locals whatever country you're in and not coming with your agenda because there are a lot of organizations out there unfortunately that come with their own agendas. It is not honoring their traditions, their customs and their values. What works most efficiently and most successfully is when you work hand in hand with the host communities. You listen to them, you honor them, you ask them what are your

needs and how can we support you within reason (Interview 2, Yogi C, Page 8, Line 348-363).

Understanding the interconnectedness of the peacebuilder and community.

Karma yogis understood the interconnectedness of the peacebuilder and community. The yogis recognized that their service work was guided by the community: their needs, their conflicts, and the ever changing climate that was in the developing countries. For Yogi A, her yoga practice was therapeutic. Yogi A's yoga practice helped her to release emotions in order to feel safe in her body and feel safe with her emotions. Yogi A extrapolated what yoga gave to her and tried to create a framework that would be easily replicable.

Yogi A stated the following:

I am hoping that yoga is helping to redefine communities and the way that people function in communities. You know what we have seen with the local teachers is that their compassion, it was always there, they now have a way to express it.

They are able to share the practice with others and that makes them feel really good to be peace building within their own communities in that sense. I think that helps with a ripple effect (Yogi A, Page 23, Line 1050-1053).

Yogi B said that her yoga practice made her feel like her soul would like to be in Peru all the time. Yogi B had this idea of bridging the planet and sharing the growth and the opportunities she has had by being in Peru with others. Yogi B describes this aspect with great happiness and conveys a sense of completeness, stating:

Leading groups and changing the way leaders lead, and how companies give through philanthropy and giving programs, to make it more heart-based. The

relationship with the people in Peru; I had relationships with a lot of the projects. I had relationships with the children. I had relationships with the hotels and the restaurants and the storeowners, and it's like family there. I miss them and I'm grateful to what they taught me. I have such strong roots in Peru, and I actually have such a strong bond. My ancient soul, my ancient self, is at home in Peru, and is awakened by just being around the indigenous community and culture and people. I get more hugs per day in Peru than I can count. My relationship is one of deep, deep chords and deep respect (Yogi B, Page 12-13, Line 543-572).

Yogi B reveals that the culture and people of Peru are peaceful, and filled with gratitude even with so little economically and many social issues. If they need a roof fixed or a house built, the whole community stops everything and does that. It is not even a question, so they never feel that they are alone.

When Yogi C first arrived at the airport in Haiti, it was just kind of chaos, a free for all with the baggage, but somehow in the midst of chaos, there was this feeling of calm, and Yogi C felt that on the streets too. It was mayhem, but even there was a sense of pervasive calm in the chaos of it all. Yogi C stated it as following:

I just looked into people's eyes, and I made that connection, and that happens often in Haiti; I feel peace. Peace I found most with the leaders of the organizations; they have a very serene and dedicated demeanor, and their organizations all are about peace keeping and building the future. The participants that are in the organizations are all about peace keeping and building their future. I find that the organizations, the leaders and the communities are

genuinely people who overall want peace. There is also a feeling of scarcity that could go away, but at the end of the day, that's just people looking out for their families when there's not enough food; when there's not enough to go around but overall, there's a pervasive feeling of peace (Interview 2, Yogi C, Page 2-3, Line 72-110).

Yogi C elaborates on the community in Haiti:

The people that I've met are the most inspiring, dedicated, compassionate, thoughtful people. I have met people that have barely anything to even feed themselves, and they are all about empowering and feeding the kids. They just work tirelessly and they just care. They care so big, so wholeheartedly, want to make a difference, and nothing ego-based. It is in their blood that they just want to make a difference and help create a better future (Yogi C, Page 13, Line 563-573).

Learning about the life of the yogi before they were a karma yogi. Karma yogis mentioned their life before they were a yogi. One of the similarities in this research is that all of the yogis had corporate careers prior to being a yogi. They all found themselves in a state of lack and soul searching for a life of service that was filled with helping others internationally and being a peacebuilder. Yogi A was living in New York City, Yogi B was living in St. Louis, Missouri, and Yogi C was living in San Francisco, California.

Yogi B shared that she traveled to Peru to learn about ancient wisdom traditions and go to Machu Picchu and it was life changing. She sold most of her possessions in her hometown with the intention of being of service in Peru and has done so since.

Yogi C said that the main impetus for her going to Haiti was that she was struck by all of the images in the media just to illustrate a unique example. Yogi C was teaching yoga at a studio in Marin County and after the earthquake in Haiti there were just images everywhere she looked; whether it was the TV or newspapers, it was unavoidable. It felt like everywhere Yogi C turned, there were images of the destruction in Haiti. Yogi C stated it as the following:

I got really struck by what had happened there. I had just gotten back from my honeymoon. I had been backpacking for three months in Southeast Asia; in India and Nepal. Seeing the images just struck me on such a deep chord that I was so disheartened. I felt helpless, but really wanted to go help. As I was walking to class I said, "I have to go to Haiti now. I don't care what I'm going to do when I'm there, but I know that I'm going to be helping the people in Haiti more than I am going to be helping these women" (Yogi C, Page 10, Line 451- 465).

Superordinate Theme: Interpreting the Impact of the International Karma Yogi

This theme delved into what it meant to be an international karma yogi. Yogis recognized that there were safety precautions in some areas, that they simply could not be of service to everyone and that conflict came in many forms on the ground in the developing countries they were in. The impact in the areas that the yogis served was vast

and varied with each yogi. The needs were less varied in that each community needed their basic needs met and were compelled by survival.

Understanding the social impact of the international karma yogi. The karma yogis understood that they were agents of change in the communities that they were in. Each yogi impacted the community they were in and the experience of being of service as the yogi impacted them as well. Yogi A thought of the social impact of the international karma yogi on the micro level in attempting to have people be more truthful and authentic when they communicate. Yogi A said the following:

There are many different situations. Every country, every organization, ever training there is something that sticks with you. I would say there was one thing that stood out in Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, I mentioned before that the group was Christian, Muslim and Buddhist. Everybody came together, the 48 counselors that we had and the Muslim men were very skeptical. They asked what is yoga? Is it a religion? Is it this or that? I basically had a little handout for the person that was the most vocal. I gave him a handout about what yoga is. It was just very much about yoga the physical practice, that it is not a religion. But I always say take a class, and we will have a discussion and you can tell me if it's a religion. We can revisit this. I don't want to tell you, I want you to decide. I remember him being very skeptical of the whole training and at the end in Sri Lanka we had certification ceremony and then they gave me a gift and the young man got up and just said that yoga had changed his life and he couldn't wait to go back to his community and teach. That was really amazing to me that he had found a way, or

yoga had found a way to open him to the possibility and that now, not only was he not a skeptic, he wanted to be an ambassador. I thought that this was amazing (Yogi A, Page 26, Line 1151-1181).

Yogi B thought that the social impact of the international karma yogi was extraordinary. In addition, she felt as though this social impact would feed out into the world of helping people with a huge shift in paradigm that is taking place right now for a new planet, new world, and a sustainable world.

It is the work of allowing the wisdom; ancient wisdom teachings around the planet to be spread through our modern world in ways that we can receive it and be more in our hearts. To make decisions that are really for a greater good and long-term benefit, and if we can come back to our own jobs or our own truth, or our own higher purpose, and then share that with them out in the world. It will just feed on and feed on and feed on, and that is our mission. When someone travels to Peru and they do inner work, they do service and karma yoga, it is not only helping those local children or people. When they go back to their own jobs and leadership roles, or the children go back to their own communities, they, too, can implement their own passions, their own heart work for a greater call and a greater purpose. So the overall is allowing more people to thrive, more people to align to higher purpose and truth for a greater good in a more sustainable planet (Yogi B, Page 18, Line 795-813).

Yogi C has brought hundreds and hundreds of participants on yoga trips and has seen them go on to create their own community projects. There has been a mother-daughter

team that has come with Yogi C three times to Haiti and created their own nonprofit that builds homes for children in Haiti. Yogi C talked about her social impact as well as the effect it has on others:

I have had people quite a few other people create their own organizations. A woman that's just come on my trip this past June, she's going to live in Haiti for six months. She has basically taken on the role, a volunteer position of being on the executive team for the art school, because she believes so much in the kids and what they're doing and was so impacted that she is going down there. She sold her house, she quit her very successful job, and she is going for it. For me personally, I could never really travel somewhere again when I'm traveling internationally and not give back to the community or be in some kind of creative project. I just so wholeheartedly believe in service, and it has totally affected me. I have done huge grassroots efforts and fundraising to build the children's home and school. You don't even really know how that's going to impact people on a long-term basis. I met a woman on a flight who she was flying and I had just gotten back from another trip for Haiti. She was flying with her two kids from Miami to San Francisco. I was looking through my pictures and she asked, "What are those pictures?" So I told her about our project in Haiti, and she gathered her two kids, and she said, "We are going to do a fundraiser for you." They did this phenomenal fundraiser in Miami when they got back, you never really know. Maybe someone attending that fundraiser is going to do something different in their lives (Yogi C, Page 14-16, Line 630-697).

Recognizing relationships of yogis and the community. Within this particular subtheme there were differences in the group. Yogi A tried not to be too personally involved in order to make sure that her personal motivation stayed true.

We're doing this thing and you know, I know people would always ask, "How do you deal with hearing everyone's story?" "I don't. I don't know anyone's story." Because it doesn't matter. I know everyone has one. Right? I don't need to know how many times someone was assaulted and by whom and what. I just know that generally there probably is a history with everyone I meet. I am not there to know about the history, I am there to teach yoga, to teach these breathing exercises and teach people how to help themselves. It is probably about keeping a boundary for me to not have to take on people's story. With that said, people do try to manipulate you too. You know people will want to tell you their story and whether the story is true or not, it's a difficult situation because it creates another commodity, you know what I mean? Instead of just giving money away you must be protective in that way. With that being said, the counselors and teachers have such huge hearts and just really want to help their community. I definitely have a loyalty and I especially have an affection for everyone but at the same time, in order for me to survive emotionally, there are boundaries I had to have (Yogi A, Page 18, Line 785- 825). Wherever there are child soldiers, wherever there's children being sexually trafficked or assaulted. I gravitate more towards the cause maybe instead of a country or tribe.

Yogi B mentioned the idea of a meaningful life in regard to community. Yogi B thought that contributing to others through service and through her own inner work led to having more fulfillment. Yogi B said the following:

Just by the presence and the warmth of showing that we care, I think that increases the state of peace. That bridges the planet and helps collaborate a sense of union, and that is really what the work is now, that we are karma yogis trying to bridge the planet to share and support one another as we can feel the interconnectedness of all (Interview 2, Yogi B, Page 12, Line 508-516).

Yogi C said that each trip was totally different depending on which nonprofit that she worked with and which country they were in. Yogi C stated it as following:

In Peru we partnered up with a wonderful orphanage, we contacted the orphanage ahead of time, and we asked what kind of supplies they needed. They had everything from newborn children to kids that are 18 years old. They gave us a whole list of items that they wanted, and then we also shopped when we went there because their kitchen was in dire need of food. When we were there on site, we did everything from English classes to teach the kids, some fun yoga activities as well as we played games with the kids, we held the infants and rocked them to sleep. In Mexico, the orphanage that we partnered with, they really wanted a mosaic, a mural painted on their orphanage. They wanted to beautify their orphanage, we got all the paint, and then brought them all kind of supplies. We each brought two duffel bags filled with kids' clothes and toys and together with

the kids made the most beautiful mural for their orphanage (Yogi C, Page 5, Line 203-225).

Addressing survival, need and conflict. Karma yogis addressed survival, need, and conflict in their role as peacebuilders. Each yogi worked with agencies/organizations on the ground in the developing country they were in. Yogi A provided trainings to counselors and addressed the needs of trauma survivors through yoga and breathing. Yogi B and C worked with many agencies for the needs of children and women through teaching, building, nurturing, and overall elevating the survival in the community. Yogi A worked in countries in which the government was very corrupt and there was great concern for the safety of the people in the community:

It was very violent in some areas that that were working with child soldiers and in Sri Lanka the child soldiers were seen as an enemy of the state. In the DRC, in the city of Goma, the city was invaded by rebels. There was an election that was going on, and War Child was taking their own countries staff into Rwanda because Goma's right on the border there with Rwanda because it was too dangerous. After the election happened, Goma was invaded and the rebels came in and decimated the city. When the invasion happened in that town, that little encampment grew to 5,000 and now War Child's focus no longer was on rehabilitation and wellness, it was about security and survival and it became how do we get food for 5,000 people (Yogi A, Page 9, Line 383-395).

In Burundi, the population was child soldiers and the focus ended up becoming on these girls who were child soldiers who had been kidnapped and taken away. The

demographic there was all young girls who had been taken and had varying degrees of education and so this organization went in there to set up an academic program and it was residential (Yogi A, Page 13, Line 582-592).

In Uganda I was working with an organization or girl's school that was a compound, walled in, run by Ugandan nuns and during the crisis in Uganda the rebels would come into the villages and steal children. This phenomenon developed where the parents would send their children into town or to larger facilities to sleep at night. It became called, "The Nightwalkers" and the kids would migrate into the towns and sleep and the Sister at this compound took in 3,000 children a night to sleep on the ground for their survival (Yogi A, Page 14, Line 626-637).

Yogi B saw her impacting conflict in Peru, and with the people that she was helping by addressing the social problems that her initiative has been targeting. Yogi B has been working on secondary issues. The real issues went back to the 1500s when the Spanish took over the Incas. Yogi B stated it as following:

I think the biggest conflict is the male/female roles, and that it's a chauvinistic country, and the government acknowledges this. There is no real empowerment for women or family planning or choice. There are unnecessary pregnancies that women just want to give up the children so easily and then abandon them because they don't even have the means or ways of supporting them. I think more work around women's welfare and well-being/health issues. The biggest conflict on an educational level is to empower women and get to renew the respect of the

women's roles in that society. Alcoholism is an issue and subservience issues between men and women, and family units that are really not developed. I think my next work is about empowerment of women around the world, because I've been focusing on the children because there are so many uncared for children. So many abandoned and orphaned children, and it's really a secondary social problem. The main problem comes from the women's choice in protecting and birth control or just saying no. There's some abuse around male and female family dynamics and alcoholism. The alcohol came in from the 1500s when the Spanish took over the Inca culture, and they got them to go to church by giving them alcohol at the end of the service, and so it's been what they think is part of getting closer to God is getting very drunk more than you can imagine (Interview 2, Yogi B, Page 8-9, Line 334-384).

Yogi C stayed out of conflict, as her purpose was to work with women and children. She knew there was conflict going on but always made sure that she worked with a very reliable tour operator on the ground that knew everything going on and had their pulse on if there were areas to avoid. Yogi C, when asked about her views on conflict and specifically conflict in Haiti while she was there, explained that even if there was conflict her perception was to find the peace:

I am a conflict evader; I chase peace. I try to embody it, even though I don't always embody it. I definitely do not get into any kind of drama or conflict, even in the bigger picture and situation in the world. I stay on a little harmonious level. We don't work with any conflict, I work with women and children and some men

as well. There are men that run the orphanages or different projects. For the most part, I feel like women are the ones that are really coming from heart and they will do anything and everything to help with their kids' education as well as the teachers. They are the most reliable with money that I have found in terms of they aren't going to squander it on liquor or cigarettes. Sometimes in Haiti you see a lot of women just working their tails off and a lot of men sitting around playing checkers. Don't get me wrong, there's a ton of hardworking men in Haiti but I find throughout all of my developing country travels, I want to say the women work a heck of a lot more than the men. My stance is going in there and stepping down from speaking and just compassionately and truly listening to them I think is a great key to conflict resolution because at the end of the day everybody there that I've met wants the same things. They want shelter, food, health, sanitary conditions, schooling and education. A lot of them just want their basic needs met, and a lot of people need to be heard (Yogi C, Page 6-8, Line 275-301, 330-346).

Superordinate Theme: Reviewing the life of service as an international karma yogi

This theme described the journey and the experiences of the international karma yogi. These three karma yogis all have chosen to be of service to help other human beings, to be the voice of those who are not heard, and for the spirit of giving. In being a part of this research they were able to take a step back and see themselves in different roles as the peacebuilder, the humanitarian, the karma yogi, and a conflict resolver. They

all recognized and accepted that change was part of this journey for them and that their identity shifted on their path as a yogi.

Reflecting on being of service to trauma survivors and conflict. Karma yogis reflected on the act of being of service to trauma survivors and dealing with conflict. Yogi A was in more traditional situations that consisted of trauma survivors and communities while Yogi B and C were immersed in service through situations that did not have the level of heightened threat and trauma that was present in Yogi A's service work. Yogi A did not view conflict resolution being possible when one party was perceiving another party as the perpetrator. If we are all less reactive in our responses, then there is the possibility that conflict could be resolved. Yogi A discusses conflict and trauma in general:

We worked with many child soldiers, and there was a lot of resentment in communities in Sri Lanka and in Uganda because, in essence, the child soldiers were the perpetrators. They were the ones who did things, even though it was due to the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). They were perceived as, "Well, this child was forced to kill my husband, and now you're giving him aid." It's just there was a resentment that, "We were the ones that suffered, because my husband was killed, or so-and-so, but yet, we're not the ones getting the relief. The child soldiers are the ones that're getting the relief." I sort of saw conflict resolution as far as reintegration and how communities were trying to be at peace with the murderers, quote-unquote, coming back into their villages. Some people were forced to kill their own family members so that they could never go home, so there's all these levels. There was a lot of people who didn't want the taboo of

being called a child soldier or that they were sexually assaulted, because that meant that they could never get married or that their families would disown them. So you ended up working and not being able to identify populations or certain demographics because there's taboo. I think every country and every situation is going to be different, and it could just be prejudices that are generationally deep, or it could be a prejudice that is just one person deep, but it can have an impact in the community. It really is situation by situation (Interview 2, Yogi A, Page 6-7, Line 240-302)

Yogi A proceeded to talk about her time in Sri Lanka and the conflict that was present there at the time right as the civil war had ended.

In Sri Lanka, the Tamil Tigers which the Tamils were considered an ethnic group they were seen as enemies of the state, so the government was after them, where in Uganda, the government was after the LRA, not necessarily the child soldiers. In Sri Lanka, the Tamil orphans were kept completely separate, in a very remote location, and the other orphans were not on display, but they weren't in a remote location. Sri Lanka, on the surface, it looked safe, but there was always this huge undercurrent of stress and tension and not being able to trust the police or the government. While I was there, the U.N. actually was thrown out. There were these white vans that would just show up and take people away, so it wasn't that there was a civil war happening, but there was always this threat and worry of the government, that the Tamils might be regrouping in the north (Interview 2, Yogi A, Page 9, Line 378-417).

Yogi B has seen incredible conflicts get resolved in ways that she felt were priceless to witness and to be part of where there were meetings in the indigenous communities where the men sat on one side and the women on the other and they voted. There was tension around past organizations, NGOs coming in to do service work, really not following their commitments or having problems with the indigenous communities or disrupting that rhythm and flow that they had on their own. Yogi B discussed being of service and using conflict resolution: when new projects were being presented, there was a lot of conflicts around past judgments and past situations that left them judging or cautious of who they let into their inner communities in Peru. Yogi B saw beautiful ways of integrating into the community with such respect instead of coming in and knowing everything:

It took a lot of time to build those relationships and have those personal experiences to those indigenous ways and customs. At that point you can meet them where there are with their values instead of dictating our ideas what we think they need for a better life for them. It's just a process, and it is patience, and it's holding space and listening to their needs and their problems and their issues instead of making assumptions. I saw that by people taking notes in their Quechua language of the issues and the problems. You show up and roll call takes place for attendance and the handshakes and the procedures that went with it was really an important part of immersing in the culture, it was very systematic and all problems were discussed, acknowledged and listened to. I think the main thing about conflict resolution in that environment is collaborative efforts that they feel

that they're being part of what is coming together or being worked in (Interview 2, Yogi B, Page 5-6, Line 214-264).

The majority of Yogi C's work since she started leading the humanitarian yoga retreats has been in Haiti. On Yogi C's first trip that she brought participants down, she was working the majority of her time with a woman in Haiti who was so hard working; she would accomplish more in a day than the larger NGOs did in a week. Yogi C continued to speak of this woman in Haiti as well as some of the organizations that she worked with:

After meeting this incredible woman in Haiti and seeing her in action, then it was very natural for me to continue to bring people down. My husband and I, through the enormous help of a ton of people, have built a children's home and school in Jacmel; a beautiful 12,000 square-foot building. We have partnered with a nonprofit organization and they are one hundred percent volunteer-based organization, one hundred percent of the donations that we received went directly to the Children's Center, which is pretty incredible. I also had my yoga retreat groups that I brought as well. We work with three or four other really wonderful organizations that are down there. There's a wonderful foundation and they have taken 100 of the most impoverished kids off the streets of Jacmel. Most of these kids had no idea where their next meal was coming from, and the foundation provides three meals a day for these kids, regular education during the day, and then art education in the afternoon and these kids are thriving. These kids are also

beautifying the streets of Jacmel. They've got these city block-long mosaic walls that are all over town now (Yogi C, Page 4-5, Line 146- 192).

Yogi C continues to discuss being of service in an area that was devastated in Haiti and some of the mechanisms in place that were not always so beneficial such as the following:

When I walked into the tent city the first day some kids came up to me right away but these adults looked really unhappy and had snarls on their on their faces wondering what I was going to do. When volunteering for a program within the U.N there were a lot of people who were were very intrusive. The U.N. wanted us to go and basically find out exactly what was happening, how many people were living in the tents, because some people thought they were lying so they could get more food and clothing allocated to them. I was there with a Haitian interpreter, myself, and a U.N. officer. It just did not feel good to me going in and just invading their life and I know at the end of the day the U.N. was there to help them, whereas when I walked into the tent city and just started practicing yoga, and people came on their will and just joyfully took part in the practice. I was creating peace in their heart, and I was creating fun and joy and less conflict. At the end of the day, I think it's really important to connect with what breaks your heart. What is it that you are most wanting to impact? What breaks my heart the most, and how can I be of most impact? How can I serve to my highest potential, and I find that when you're really dedicated about a cause or dedicated about whatever you're passionate about, if you can channel your energy that direction,

that's going to be most impactful because you're whole-heart is behind it (Yogi C, Page 17-18, Line 754-800).

Advocating being a humanitarian. Karma yogis discussed their lives in a developing country being of service as an international karma yogi as a humanitarian, and there appeared to be a dichotomy of feelings about how they consider themselves as a humanitarian. For Yogi B and Yogi C in particular, they considered themselves being a humanitarian. Yogi A believed that being a humanitarian was shining a light on others, being a voice for others and standing up and speaking for others. Through the yoga path, Yogi B was aligning to higher divine purposes, divine plans, divine order and timing for the greater good. She stated that it was about selfless service:

Sharing our hearts' work for a greater good. There was dedication for a collaborative effort, for a betterment of the planet and all of its people, and sustainability. Most humanitarians have this higher divine communication and calling in working for a greater goal and good. Yoga is a path of opening to these higher states of consciousness, so the more we're on this yoga path, not everyone, but certain people, can awaken to this direct knowing and direct higher purpose of why they're there on this planet and fulfill that calling. Doing karmic yoga or being of service, as a yogi, is, I think, a missing link in a lot of yoga paths, and mainstream yoga world. I think there's a need for more connection with karma yoga and global work, unity awareness and global shifts of how we can learn from each other and help each other thrive in the planet.

She continued:

I don't think you have to have a spiritual opening, like I said, to be a humanitarian. You can come at it from a different angle that you just are wanting to preserve the Earth or are really connected to the science of maybe a project or something like that. From a different angle that is more intellectual (Yogi B, Page 14-15, Line 612-653).

Yogi C answers what being a humanitarian means to her as a karma yogi is being of service and leading with your heart:

I think that a lot of it has to do with the well-being component. What separates us is that we've got this whole element of nurturing ourselves, and I find that when you really can nurture yourself, then you can nurture others. It comes from a much higher vibration (Yogi C, Page 6, Line 241-253).

However, Yogi A did not consider herself to be a humanitarian. She thought that she just has done what she could and would continue to do. She stated it as the following:

There are so many crises and so many different things that need attention and so many people really are doing so much in so many ways, you know, little and big and so I think that's a lot of humanitarians out there more so that should get credit. One of the people I worked with is now leading the Ebola team in Sierra Leone, I mean he is a humanitarian and I do not put myself in that category (Yogi A, Page 21, Line 930-954).

Reflecting on being of service in a region of conflict. Karma yogis reflected on being of service in a region of conflict. They all perceived conflict in a different way, Yogi A dealt with situational conflict as it came and realized that it was all par for the course, Yogi C

viewed conflict as it not existing at all, and choosing to only see peace. Yogi A discussed her thoughts that when people feel threatened they will react and when people are in a desperate situation they will act accordingly in relation to basic survival needs. Yogi A believes that it is human nature that we must find ways of adapting around it while being prepared, educating, finding peace and taking these moments. She stated it as the following:

I mean for me using yoga and breathing exercises is resolving conflict. We all have the same kind of nervous system. So if we all learn how to take deep breaths and we all learn how to take a moment and not just react and we make space for the opportunity or the potential for peace or for making a difference (Yogi A, Page 22, Line 970-981).

Yogi B thought that it was sometimes easier being a yogi in Peru than in the United States because “the more you develop on your yogi path and step into higher states of consciousness and open their hearts, you become more sensitive to technology, to the concrete jungle or grid of cars and all this life that we have established and created...In Peru, they care about the Earth.”

Yogi B explained this as following:

Before they eat, they put a little aside for Pachamama– for Mother Earth. Before they drink, they pour a little to her. They honor the planet, and they honor things in rituals and ceremonies that feel so connected to the yoga path. They’re very integrated and respected, and meditation is part of their work and what they understand (Yogi B, Page 16, Line 704-717).

Yogi C thought that Haiti and India were the most shocking of all the countries that she has been to. It was shocking that Haiti even existed: that much trash, that much chaos, that much poverty, and that much squalor. It tore Yogi C's heart apart every time she went through there, every time she arrived in Haiti that these conditions even existed.

Yogi C stated it as following:

You see just mountains of trash in some areas as far as the eye can see, and rivers just filled with trash, and animals eating their way through the trash. Then right next to that river that's filled with trash, there's all these women that are set up at these outdoor markets trying to sell bananas and plantains. Every time I drive through Port-au-Prince, I just wonder, how are they even surviving? One of the boys that we built a home for, he was 17 years old and was living with his sister, who after the earthquake, literally her home was the size of a car, but all wooden walls and she brought in nine orphans. They are all sleeping on one mattress, her and nine orphans, and her brother was sleeping in a rolled-up tarp underneath her home, if that paints any picture. I visited tent cities, I was just there a couple weeks ago, and there was a family of four kids, two parents living in one tent, it's shocking (Yogi C, Page 8-9, Line 364-392).

Recognizing the identity shift of the yogi pre and post service work. The karma yogis discussed the identity shift pre- and post-service work. Identity is something that is ever changing with every experience that we have. Major life changes such as getting completely outside of your comfort zone and volunteering in developing countries

alters a person's identity for good. Yogi A thought her identity had shifted and that it was positive for her and she now has better boundaries:

I'm much less tolerant of people's silliness. I'm much more demanding of my relationships and how I spend my time, and for me, that's just been a shift of boundaries. It's like, 'That doesn't work for me. This does, that doesn't.' I'm much more economical with my time now, the way I do things (Interview 2, Yogi A, Page 10, Line 425-438).

Yogi B also thought that her identity has shifted. She stated that there was a dissolving of the self. Yogi B's identity was the biggest thing she was holding space for herself. She stated it as the following:

Understanding this new identity of real service and letting go and supporting the children and the projects when I come back to the U.S. and family conditioning and values. With this new identity, I can see how much I have changed and shifted, and so that's the biggest experience that I'm having right now is this holding space and adjusting to this new identity, but it's the most powerful thing I'm experiencing (Interview 2, Yogi B, Page 14, Line 608-622).

She continued:

The shift has to do with the unraveling of the self and just really opening to selflessness, and when we let go of all of these conditionings and rules we then don't know where we fit in, if we come back into those old relationships and people that have those ideas of how we used to be. I felt in my old yoga community where I taught for 12 years that I was put in a box of how I used to

teach or how I used to be, and I've changed so much, so I feel the identity of that has just been part of my integration with this work. It is just a lot of trust that I'm supported in a different way and then when am about to take a step, the universe supports me, but it's a little scarier because it is unknown. There's an unknown, but I'm being held to support a force for a greater good. When I stepped into that role, the magic and the material way of living disappeared, and it became some other monetary way of living through the planet and world that is hard to explain. It was just provided for in so many ways. When I come back into the material time and money U.S. systems and structures, this new identity that I have it is kind of confusing, and so that is the bridging of a new way of doing business. We can build a flow of money for good, and so we can do our humanitarian work and be in newer models and newer ways of thinking for social enterprises and non-profits and being held to support the selfless way of sharing, bridging, connecting and bringing peace around the world (Interview 2, Yogi B, Page 14-15, Line 639-670).

Yogi C was living in her head before she started yoga even though she has always been a really cheerful, joyful and optimistic person. Now Yogi C still embarks upon adventures, but they are heart-based. Yogi C stated that 90 percent of what she does she incorporates giving back to others. Her identity has shifted personally and it the way that people know her. Yogi C continues:

It started actually before in my local community because a friend of mine had breast cancer, who was a yoga teacher, and I held a big fundraiser for her, and it

was a big event in the yoga community. We raised quite a substantial amount of money in a very short amount of time, and then, from there I got hired to host other parties and events similar to that kind of event. Even prior to my trips to Haiti, people knew me as wanting to give back and hosting fundraisers for people or projects or organizations in need (Yogi C, Page 10, Line 423-432, Interview 2, Yogi C, Page 7-8, Line 306-339).

Superordinate Theme: Reflecting on the Identity of an International Karma Yogi

The identity of the karma yogi is based from a place of love and internal peace. These yogis are able to lead others in yoga and service because they themselves have surrendered and reflected in their own lives on how to be a source of light. They teach others to breathe, to move their bodies, to find wholeness and to be of service to others in this world. Their stories of who they are and what they have done are described within this theme.

Addressing heart based living. Karma yogis addressed heart based living when they reflected on their identity. Yogi B and Yogi C were more vocal about their quest for a heart based life of service whereas Yogi A was more pragmatic in her approach. Yogi A thought that karma yogis helped people witness action, somebody doing an action or being involved in a process that was outside of themselves: “It was more about how we gave back, or how we, as a group, supported each other.” Yogi A thought that it was important for people to see how people were giving and not focusing on getting back.

Yogi B thought that peace had to start with inner harmony, bringing mindfulness and moment-to-moment awareness into a state of acceptance. She thought that resistance

and judging got in the way of just being at peace and being in the moment. Yogi B stated it as following:

Full embodiment of what is, and then holding space with a heart-based reality of compassion, and self-love. When we have self-love and compassion, then we are able to be at peace with our own ups and downs and our obstacles and also be able to share that with others (Yogi B, Page 14, Line 600-611).

Yogi B continues to elaborate on how her heart has changed since being a karma yogi in Peru:

My heart changed. I think the modern world causes us to dull our heart space so much, to stay productive and do what we need to do. I think that is the biggest shift in opening that I've received by doing karma yoga around the world is the human connection and bonds of doing service and seeing other cultures and opening our hearts to people. Instead of us and them, we join and build relationships with these beautiful people and have so much to learn. I feel like I've learned more from these indigenous people than sitting in a classroom reading a book. It has been the biggest heart-shifting experience of my life. An international karma yogi is the embodiment of that offering for the greater good, and their choices should support greater well-being for not themselves but for a larger scale and bigger picture (Yogi B, Page 17, Line 744-755).

Yogi C thought that yoga allowed people to drop down into their heart and into their body and just to start to see this connection of mind/body/spirit was an opportunity to really awaken within the divine light that was you. Yogi C felt like with yoga and

slowing down the mind and nurturing people's heart and their body that they were given this beautiful opportunity to awaken a lot within themselves that might not be awakened otherwise. Yogi C personally has been awakened a lot through the practice of yoga. She stated it as following:

I also believe that yoga just awakens you to love and that at the end of the day you have two choices. For every choice, you've got fear or love. For me personally, yoga has been this divine opportunity just to live in a place of love and abundance. Yoga means union and to unite, and for me, yoga is all about that. When you say 'Namaste', it means I see the light in you, and you see that in me, we are in this place together, we are one. I truly believe that everyone has a divine spark, and everybody has this light. I feel like right now, the majority of people I know are living in about 30 percent of that light, and the rest are not living in that light because of fears and disappointments and insecurities, negativity. When you get awakened, there is this divine opportunity to give back to others because karma is one of the tenets of the yoga practice, just this whole idea of giving, the more you give, the more you truly receive and I feel that wholeheartedly. I've brought participants on trips, and have experienced firsthand when you are able to introduce people to the joys of philanthropy and then looking in another person's eyes that you think that before you go to Haiti, you'll have nothing in common with these people. Then you start to work alongside them, and they are the same as you with the same hopes and fears and dreams. I also believe that yoga just awakens you to love and that at the end of the day you

have two choices. For every choice, you've got fear or love. For me personally, yoga has been this divine opportunity just to live in a place of love and abundance (Yogi C, Page 3-4, Line 107-141).

Leading international yoga/service travel. Analysis of the transcripts revealed the variations that karma yogis led in international yoga and service travel. Yogi A said that there were many nuances to consider in working in developing countries such there being no electricity or water at times and there were more unforeseen circumstances that took shape. Being more respectful of those processes and circumstances made Yogi A feel like there were limitations. Yogi A stated that:

I was more idealistic, that this can happen. I think you still have to have that idealism to keep going forward, but to balance it and just say, "Okay, this is not a setback, necessarily. This is just a new path or a different challenge" (Interview 2, Yogi A, Page 13, Line 565-574).

Yogi B has created her own nonprofit to be of service in Peru, has worked through other organizations on the ground in Peru and is now branching out into the profit sector for karma yoga trips. Yogi B created her nonprofit in 2011 and worked with others in Peru, a group that wanted to start an orphanage project, and she was very interested in that and joined them. Yogi B stated the following:

It was a full circle from my first day of receiving a calling, that I got to spend time with projects in permaculture, greenhouse development, women's health information, empowerment and aid for children and families – disabled children. I also helped the organization set up a weaving school in the community –

indigenous community of Sacaca. We had 12 children coming every Saturday, we would send them lunch, and they got a weaving lesson. After that, I went back and forth to the United States to try and fundraise. I got some funding, and it was sustaining me barely the first couple years, but it was very hard for me to be on the ground, be so involved with the children, hands-on with the projects, think of grant-writing and fundraising. I had a board of directors, they were there just as support for my work. In the past two years, I have gotten out of the bigger projects and more into thinking business-wise, how I can sustain a business model and give to the children. That is what I've been focused more on; developing global travel and leading journeys to Peru. This way people traveling can have this enriching experience and open to some of the principles of the Inca, descendants of the Incas, of heart-based living, reciprocity, team and really collaboration. It is how they live together in a community, and it's how we are trying to take the US into a new paradigm. At the same time, the journeys have been incredible, and a portion of the money of the journeys have gone to sponsoring orphaned and abandoned children with their education, clothes, and supplies. Our work on the ground has been much more around specific children that I've gotten very close too. I've become the madrina, or godmother, for two of them, and I've gotten much more into social work with the personal cases of this family and the situations of the kids. I also am now working on a social enterprise which is a for-profit entity, which will be just the journey business. It will be bringing educational, leadership training, children's service trips, and

transformational journeys to Peru. The idea of this enterprise will be changing their lives, and being much more in their hearts and connected to the global world. So when they go back to their own communities in the US or around the world, they can give back in a much more heart-based, connected, unified way (Yogi B, Page 6-8, Lines 256-337).

On the first trip to Haiti, Yogi C worked for various organizations including the Salvation Army and UNICEF, as well as with other local philanthropists. Yogi C elaborated on her work and stated that she has a company and through it she led 12 trips to Haiti alone, and as well trips to Peru, Mexico, Bali, Guatemala, and to the Dominican Republic. “Each trip has a service element where we give back to the locals. There's also a yoga component as well where each day we honor and celebrate our own health and well-being, and often we're teaching yoga to the kids or women in the community” (Yogi C, page 2-3, Line 52-140).

Reflecting on teaching yoga in developing countries. Karma yogis reflected on teaching yoga in developing countries in similar ways, although Yogi A taught yoga in a more formalized training type situation, whereas Yogi B and C utilized yoga throughout their service work at various times. Yogi A thought that yoga classes helped with connection and maintaining connection, and then just allowing people, whether they could communicate their emotions or feelings or not, that everyone, after a yoga class, had the same feeling of relief. She stated that,

I think that it helps in finding a commonality that may not happen through words or other processes. Usually, at the beginning, they are really giggly, not fearful,

but insecure or unsure, perhaps anxious. And then as they start to do yoga usually by the third or fourth session, they've begun to experience the changes in their own body, and so they become more joyful. They laugh. They talk about how they are sleeping better and they are eating more. They don't feel as tight and tense, and I think just having that ripple out is the best way to talk about the transition, is that people start to just relax, in a way. Everything is not so serious. Just even the process many times, when we do the training for the mental health staff, they show up, and they are in their work clothes, and they have their pads and pencils, and they are very tense about giving the right answer and appearing knowledgeable and intellectual. Taking all of that away, it sort of removes the hierarchy too. The men aren't better than the women, and the elders aren't either, everyone starts out equal. Everyone has the same opportunity to do the breathing exercises and to do certain poses or not (Interview 2 Yogi A, Page 13-14, Line 579-614).

Yogi B said that her intentions for her future business were yoga retreat journeys as connecting further. Yogi B had practiced and taught yoga for 15 years until she really connected with children and connected with people around the world. It was not until that work that Yogi B really had a big shift. She described it as following:

I feel that's what I want to offer to others through these experiences. When we travel around the world to different places, we can really tap into that service and offering that, and now we can see the value and then bring it into our own families, communities and work. Karma yoga is the embodiment of yoga

practices in daily life and being able to offer those gifts in way of service and sharing that for others and offering being a yogi and being of service (Interview 2, Yogi B, Page 4-5, Lines 138-142, 171-180).

Yogi C reflected on teaching yoga in Haiti in the most informal of ways while creating joy in the lives of a community: On her first day she walked out of the compound she was staying in, and there was a tent city with about 90 tents. She walked, just a little hesitantly out of the compound, and there were all these kids there. She started just doing stretching and sun salutations, and all the kids joined her. They were all giggling and laughing, and then some adults approached and then they started following her. Every morning, she would do sun salutations, and she would have more and more people that would gather. More kids would gather. Then they started to know what they were doing. She would be out there for 45 minutes, and it was such a playful, joyful, fun time. It was interesting that some kids that she taught in America they were already shy and have body image concerns. The kids in Haiti are just all about going for it, and the adults she taught as well throughout Haiti are, too. It was this joyful, fun, playful, 45 minutes that started their day that got them out of the tent that they were living in and their situation. I feel like that was a huge gift that I was able to give them (Yogi C, Page 11, Line 482-500).

I asked Yogi C how can yoga assist communities in developing countries? She indicated to me that many people regardless of what country they are in are separated from their heads and bodies, that there is a disconnect, and that when we are present in

our bodies we are much more aware of what is really happening in our lives. She continued to say,

I also find meditation which goes hand and hand with yoga and even just those moments at the end savasana which actually disrupt the lactic acid in your brain enables you just to take deep inhales, deep exhales and not be so reactive, and that you can step back and look at your situation. Rather than immediately counting on something just really noticing from more of a bird's eye view of how to solve challenges. Yoga also creates community as well as creating unity; you are unifying your body, your heart, your spirit, your soul. With that when you are practicing yoga, you are creating that connection within other people as well. From the moment that I went to Haiti and just started practicing yoga it harmonizes people. It brings joy to people, then, there's a sense of trust that is developed and kindness. I had a very deep and special relationship with the people in the tent city that no one else in my group had on my first trip because none of them taught yoga. None of them did any physical movement with the people in the tent city (Interview 2, Yogi C, Page 5-6, Line 220-262).

Understanding breathwork and meditation. In reviewing the transcripts it was clear that karma yogis understood breathwork and meditation and the importance it has on their identity. Yogi A thought that a lot of what was the most beneficial within yoga is the breathing; learning to breathe. Yogi A stated that:

all counselors were trained in basic breathing exercises. It starts out as simple as you notice your breath and then counting your breath. Moving that into body

awareness and bringing the yoga postures into it. We would use warm-ups and then the foundation are the sun salutations (a series of yoga poses) and then being able to make choices from there. Everyone is trained in the sun salutation series but if they're working with amputees or people who you know, might have other physical and mental disabilities, they can adapt it for them. The last component is the somatic body awareness. We use that in Savasana, the final resting pose because a lot of trauma results in not knowing how to be in your body and so just using that time to calm and recalibrate through the breathing, recalibrate the nervous system and then just get back into the body in a safe environment. That is the framework of the trauma toolkit and what they learn. We work on how would you use this in your rehabilitative model, for instance if you are doing a one-on-one session with a client who is very upset, agitated, anxious, crying, you could help them with a breathing exercise to get them back in the space, back in the room and focus. (Yogi A, Page 56, Line 219-254).

Yogi B has practiced different yoga depending on what she has needed to create balance in her life. She has been open and guided on a high vibrational level to have the right teachers, the right styles and the right things show up when she has needed them to have awakenings or kundalini openings. A kundalini awakening is thought to be a way of obtaining spiritual evolution through Yogi B believes that we are all energy and if we are vibrating at a higher energy then we are attracting what is for our highest self. Yogi B stated it as following:

I started doing ashtanga yoga; the eight-limb path of yoga I had to take a medical leave of absence due to adrenal fatigue and failure. I did more restorative yin yoga and anusara yoga, for rebuilding my adrenals. After my teacher training, I focused on vinyasa flow. And ashtanga yoga and I learned how to move energy and awaken to your full potential through meditation, through breathing, through practices. I did open quite a bit during that time. I led meditations and really helped people shift into their whole awakening, and that's – and then I got initiated by Amma, which is known as the hugging saint, and Amma, that was more bhakti, devotional yoga. I only meditated and did pranayama for a year, and during that time I wasn't doing a strong physical practice because I was in pain, but it allowed me to get to higher states of awareness and consciousness. I really was opening to something that was that much bigger during those years (Yogi B, Page 10-11, Line 435-479).

When Yogi C brings groups to a developing country for service work one of the first things they do is have an opening meditation. From the opening meditation she focused on the group feeling their breath and feeling themselves supported. Yogi C taught a grounding mechanism where people, “if at any point they started to feel nervous or threatened, they would focus and take deep inhales and exhales.” She continued, “from that place of stability and just feeling really rooted and grounded and taking deep inhales and exhales, I find that the more you really start with the peace within, if you come from that place, then it's going to blossom out” (Yogi C, Page 7-8, Line 310-327).

Summary

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the lived experience of karma yogis as international peacebuilders. Central to the purpose of this study was understanding the life of the karma yoga. I discovered through this research who international karma yogis are, the true meaning of what their world looks like, the rich experiences that they have had as international peacebuilders and how their identity shifted through their time as peacebuilders. The superordinate themes and subthemes linked to all questions that were to be analyzed in this study. Defining the path of the peacebuilder addressed the lived experience of karma yogis as international peacebuilders. Interpreting the impact of the international karma yogi answered what it meant to be an international karma yogi. Reviewing the life of service as an international karma yogi revealed the experiences of the international karma yogi. Reflecting the identity of an international karma yogi looked at each facet of the yogi's identity and what defined them.

The three international karma yogis that were a part of this research study illuminated the variations in each experience as well as the vast similarities. The next chapter discusses each theme while incorporating Gandhian peace theories, human needs theory and identity theory. In addition, reflexivity will be discussed as well as the implications, limitations, and recommendations for this research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview

The lived experience of karma yogis as international peacebuilders was explored within this research. The qualitative methodology employed for this study was an interpretative phenomenological analysis that utilized three yogis that live in the United States and have worked as karma yogis in a developing country for six months or more. The questions that were central to this research were: What does it mean to be an international karma yogi? What are the experiences of an international karma yogi? What is the identity of the international karma yogi? Lastly, what is the lived experience of karma yogis as international peacebuilders?

Smith, Flowers and Larkin stated “An interpretative phenomenological analysis is concerned with understanding personal lived experience and thus with exploring persons’ relatedness to, or involvement in, a particular event or process (phenomenon)” (Smith et al., 2009). Central to using the IPA approach was to develop an intimate understanding of international karma yogis as peacebuilders. The sample size for this research was 3 participants; in addition, both interviews were lengthy in order to reflect the intricacies and detail of each participant. Each yogi was interviewed twice, after transcription of the digitally recorded interviews, the data analysis followed the procedures of IPA. Throughout the research process, note taking and journaling was utilized in order to make sure that any bias and prejudices that I might have had were bracketed throughout. The superordinate themes and subthemes that were created utilizing the IPA approach, based

on the transcriptions from the semi-structured interviews allowed for an understanding of the lived experience.

This chapter elaborates on the superordinate themes identified and discussed in Chapter four. These four themes explore the lived experience of karma yogis and answer all questions that were addressed within this study. This research supplied rich data that illustrates the variations and similarities in the life of an international karma yogi. The superordinate themes that developed in regards to the life experience of karma yogis were defining the path of a peacebuilder, interpreting the impact of the international karma yogi, reviewing the life of service as an international karma yogi, and reflecting on the identity of an international karma yogi. The themes were utilized in conjunction with the research questions relating to the lived experience of karma yogis.

Research Question 1: What is the lived experience of karma yogis as international peacebuilders?

This study was designed to explore the lived experience of karma yogis as international peacebuilders. There have been several organizations that have and are currently utilizing international karma yogis as peacebuilders but there has not been research that conveyed in-depth experiences of what the lived experience of karma yogis entailed. These three yogis shared their stories, their lives, what led them to being a karma yoga, and what took place during and as a result of them being peacebuilders. All three participants had been yogis for over a decade, had done peacebuilding work locally in their communities for an extended period of time and they all were called to do international peacebuilding in 2010. Yogi A had spent 15 months in Uganda and is still

continuing to build peace in that region. She had also been of service in Sri Lanka, Burundi and the DRC. Yogi B has spent the majority of four years as a peacebuilder in Peru. Yogi C has spent the bulk of her peacebuilding efforts in in Haiti; 12 trips since 2010 and has also been of service in Cambodia (where she is now), Peru, Mexico, Bali, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic.

Theme: Defining the Path of a Peacebuilder

For all three yogis defining the path of the peacebuilder was crucial in examining their lived experiences. All yogis stated that they transformed through being a peacebuilder, being a part of a community in a developing country, and identifying with their new lives and how they were being shaped.

The importance of the transformation of the peacebuilder and their connection to the community is key. Literature states that “As interdependent beings we relate to others and thus must always consider how our pursuit of life affects the people in our endless web of relations. I cannot be if others are not” (Bryzzheva, 2009, p ,67). There was a symbiotic relationship with the yogi and the communities that they were a peacebuilder within. Yogi B saw the people in the community as mirrors reflecting back to her the peace that they both exuded from within.

Yogi A shared the concept of having peace within herself, starting small and then bridging peace to her family and communities. Peace and Gandhian theory stated that “We are at war with ourselves and, therefore, at war with one another” (Bose, 1981, p. 160). When we find peace within we are then able to translate that into how we show up in the world. The literature discussed that our identity as humans at the most basic level

needs to respect the needs and life of all people and this is pivotal to understanding peace (Bryzzheva, 2009, p. 65). Yogi B and C also started their transformation as a peacebuilder internally before they could represent themselves to the world in that role. “In this work, peace is a mental and spiritual work, which underlies and overarches every encounter with oneself and others as a general commitment to and alignment with the dialogic pursuit of life. Peace is not achieved; it is practiced” (Bryzzheva, p. 67). The true peace was achieved for each yogi by being of service internationally and casting their net wider as a peacebuilder in the community.

Subquestion 1: What does it mean to be an International karma yogi?

The meaning of being a karma yoga is hinged on understanding the social impact of their work in the community, recognizing the relationships with those that they were serving in the community and analyzing the level of conflict, need and ultimately survival in these areas. Yogi A primarily worked with child soldiers and was in areas that communities and organizations were frequently concerned about their safety and well-being. Organizations shifted their missions based on the climate of the country and the political atmosphere. Yoga B and C were connected to the community and have a sense of belonging and peace for the people in the areas they were in. All of the yogis had an impact on the communities and created a sense of peace on the ground. The level of impact on the community was not a measure taken into account within this study.

Theme: Interpreting the Impact of the International Karma Yogi

In interpreting the impact of the international karma yogi, we can only look at the perspective of the yogi that was in the developing country. From the yogis’ perspectives,

they gauged their level of impact from the response of those they were of service to. Yogi A taught yoga, and saw people open up to something new and unfamiliar, who conveyed to her that their practice of yoga changed their life. In peace theory Gandhi spoke about people having the right mind, meaning that they would reach out in unity, love, and peace, working for harmony and an understanding of all people (Bose, 1981). Yogi B felt her impact in Peru would have a ripple effect; each time she brought others to Peru to be of service they would then find their calling and impact more people from living a life of purpose. Yogi C had converging feelings about her work in Haiti, whether she was connecting with people through fundraising or service on the ground.

There were diverging opinions about the relationship with the community as well. Yogi A thought that we all had a story, and was not interested as much in the story of someone's trauma as she was to be of service in the present moment by teaching yoga and letting that be the way she could give of herself and shine a light on peace. Yogi B felt the warmth and connection from the people of Peru and Yogi C delighted in the adventure of each service trip being filled with new people and opportunities to serve as a karma yogi.

Survival in Uganda, the DRC, Sri Lanka, Burundi, Haiti, and Peru was pressing, whether there was political instability, natural disasters, or no food and shelter; the basic needs of the people in these communities were challenged. The literature suggests that a basic needs perspective can build cultures of peace. It assumes that we all have shared needs; the need for security, shared connections, and positive identity, when these needs are met, people have healthier relationships (Staub, 2003, p.2). All of the yogis were in

these countries addressing the needs of the people either through trauma survivors, child soldiers, people who had lost their homes, their parents, or were just lacking basic needs in general. They all worked with organizations on the ground that were transforming the lives within their own communities. Human needs theory states “The fulfillment of basic needs of whole groups, and whole nations, is affected by their relationship to other groups” (Staub, 2003, P. 4). The groups on the ground that gave children a place to sleep at night so they would not be hunted, who housed sexually assaulted girls and child soldiers in orphanages these were the places and people that were and are affecting the people within that nation. Yogi C stated that “We are all the same, we all just want our basic needs met, every human has the same needs.”

Yogi A talked about human needs as well, she stated that “None of us believe we are capable of doing wrong doing until we are really in need, until we need to steal a piece of fruit to feed our family.” This connects to the literature, as “when the basic needs of whole groups of people are frustrated by difficult social conditions, such as economic problems, political upheaval, and great societal change, psychological and social processes can lead those group to turn against and victimize the others” (Staub, 2005, 34). Basic needs are important in every culture amongst all people. When they are not fulfilled in a healthy way people will develop unhealthy ways of satisfying their needs which is called destructive need satisfaction (Staub, 2005).

Subquestion 2: What are the experiences of international karma yogis?

The experiences of the international karma yoga were of being of service to

trauma survivors, advocating their role as a humanitarian, navigating through conflict in being of service and recognizing at a core level within them that their identity was shifting due to this work. All yogis in this study acted the part of a humanitarian, had an identity shift and were of service in a region that had varying levels of conflict. In regards to Yogi C, in Haiti after the earthquake there was a great need to assist trauma survivors as there was in all areas that Yogi A was located in.

Theme: Reviewing the Life of Service as an International Karma Yogi

The life of service of an international karma yogi details the journey of the pitfalls, the joys, and the meaning of being in a developing country helping people. The Gandhian perspective on peace is called sarvodaya which is welfare to all, without any distinction or exclusion and necessary to obtain true peace. This idea reaffirms being of service to all (Bose, 1981). Karma yogis believe this to be true: Yogi A reflected on being of service to a population that had many stigmas. There were taboos of being a child soldier and of them reintegrating back into the community with assistance when they were perpetrators to others. In many cases this was not well received by the community even though the children were forced to kill others.

Yogi A taught yoga to the counselors within the organizations on the ground, and these counselors taught yoga to the trauma survivors in order to assist them in their recovery. In the literature, Dr. Bessel Van der Kolk, who runs a research trauma center in Boston, became intrigued by yoga when he concluded that in order to treat trauma survivors properly you must work with the body as well as the mind (Wills, 2007).

Further research from Advocates for Survivors of Torture and Trauma partnered with Yoga Activist to do yoga with their trauma survivors, the responses were that it relaxed the body, it healed the mind, and combatted PTSD, and survivors had more positive thoughts (Lynberg, 2009, p. 1). “Yoga not only affirms the existence of the external world, but employs the perceptual relation between the self and the world as the means of meditation practice. Control of the body is equated with the mastery of external nature, and this control is achieved through focusing the senses” (Morley, 2001, p. 75). As the life of service of karma yogis are reviewed, the research is looking at the relationship with their work and how that contributes to trauma survivors, what being a humanitarian looks like as a karma yogi, and the shifts in identity for the peacebuilder.

Advocating being a humanitarian was a significant part of the life of an international karma yogi. Yogi B described sharing her heart for the greater good and the need for selfless service. She shared her feelings that being a humanitarian often times is about a higher calling that is attached to a spiritual component; a higher state of consciousness. Yogi C also discussed the importance of leading with one’s heart through being a humanitarian and nurturing yourself so that you can nurture others. Yogi A downplayed her significance as a humanitarian and was humble about what she offers in the world in comparison to those that she believes do more.

All yogis spoke of a positive shift in their identity due to their international work in developing countries. Yogi A became more conscious of her time and her relationships. Yogi B felt that she has become more selfless and supported by the universe. Yogi C transitioned from living in her head to living from her heart. The

literature reveals that social identity is “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Trepte, p. 259). Through the service work in helping others they were also able to feed their own need that they had for themselves which was a life of giving back.

Subquestion 3: What is the identity of the international karma yogi?

The identity of the international karma yogi was influenced by a stance on heart based living, leading and being a part of the international yoga/service world, teaching yoga in developing countries and understanding how breathwork and meditation were important as a peacebuilding measure for themselves and the community. Identity is consistently shifting through our life experiences and the yogis throughout their travel and service formed new identities of peacebuilders and change makers in the world. Teaching yoga for Yogi A and C was a joyful experience as they watched the community open up and engage in something that was unfamiliar but yet soothing. Yogi A created a training module for those that were helping people in country on yoga and breathe work and related to the community through movement and her mission.

Theme: Reflecting on the Identity of an International Karma Yogi

The identity of the international karma yogi shifted for each yogi. The theoretical support for social identity theory illustrates that social identity is either person based, relational, or group based. Person based social identity is your individual self-concept; e.g., what kind of person am I? Relational social identity looks at one as a certain kind of person in relation to others, and group based social identity refers to one’s perception of

oneself as an integral part of the larger group (Brewer, 2001). For each yogi, they discussed being transformed on all levels of their social identity. What kind of person they were individually, in relation to whom they were of service to and in the group as the karma yogi.

For Yogi B and C, part of their identity shifting was a more heart based approach to living, and even though Yogi A was not as vocal about heart based living she did share the importance of what big hearts the counselors within the organizations had for their community and helping others. Yogi B spoke of the modern world dulling our hearts and now being more connected and bonded to the people of Peru and in general in her own life and yoga practice. Yogi C believed that a divine light was awakened within us when we are living from a heart based place.

All yogis in this research created their own organization that linked to an on the ground organization(s) in the developing country. Yogi A taught yoga to those that served the needs of sexually assaulted girls and child soldiers. Yogi B and C both had organizations that took others to developing countries to be of service and to practice yoga. The main sentiment was consistent which was that they all had the desire to transform the lives of other people. Their identity was of being of service whether it be children in orphanages, child soldiers, sexually assaulted girls, street boys, or other westerners who also wanted to give back and were on a yoga service trip.

“Yoga is an ancient art and science that aims for high-level wellness -- physical, mental and spiritual” (Wilson, 1976, p. 261). Teaching yoga in a developing country is a core essence for an international karma yogi. Yogi A described that yoga brings people

together in a group activity, using their body and reaping the benefits of sleeping better, eating more, feeling less tense and more joyful. Yogi B has plans to create a profit retreat and yoga service organization in the future. Yogi C reflected on teaching yoga outside of a tent city in Haiti, and for that moment in the morning seeing the faces of the children and adults look joyful and at peace. Stanford University health psychologist Kelly McGonigal stated that there is evidence that yoga assists people in changing at every level; including stress, anxiety and depression (Novotney, 2009). All yogis had success in both teaching yoga and in meditation to those in developing countries.

Reflexivity

John Creswell states that “The qualitative researcher systematically reflects on who he or she is in the inquiry and is sensitive to his or her personal biography and how it shapes the study” (Creswell, p. 182, 2003). Within the research the researcher became a part of the research as the lens was reflected through the researcher. This research was challenging due to the researcher’s personal investment in the topic and yoga community. There was a shared belief system in regards to karma yogis for the researcher. This topic was compelling to the researcher as she was immersed within the yoga community and knew of the work that karma yogis were a part of internationally as peacebuilders.

The researcher journaled and took extra precautions to be objective and not form a bias while interviewing and coding which proved to be the most extensive hurdle. The importance of the research from the perspective of the researcher superseded any preconceived thoughts about karma yogis. This study was a passion project and an area that the researcher believed was undocumented in the field of peace studies. This study

was emotionally charged and allowed the researcher to have a very intimate vantage point into the lives of three karma yogis. These yogis left communities inspired and opened the door for future peace building measures. Within this study the stories of the three karma yogis became intertwined with the vision and idealism of the researcher and where she sought to be her own version of a peacebuilder.

Critical Evaluation of the Methodology

The nature of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis allowed the researcher to highlight each karma yogi's distinctive experience. It was determined that interpretative phenomenological analysis was best suited. In this study, there was an analysis of a new generation of peacebuilders through the yoga community. Can yoga be used as a tool for conflict resolution? In many programs illustrated above in the literature review it already is being done. I researched the essence of the karma yogi and understood how they were so successful at evolving consciousness one community at a time. I was intrigued by who karma yogis were and their role in conflict resolution and the world. The findings reveal diversity within the participants. Thus, the findings support that certain themes were lived more strongly for some of the participants than for others.

Yogi A demonstrates a different experience than the other two participants. For example, Yogi A did not consider herself as a humanitarian as Yogi B and Yogi C did. These contrasts offer an insight into the way in which Karma yogis considered themselves being a humanitarian and personal preferences.

The researcher must step back from the literature, and when employing a semi-structured interview schedule, participants will tend to naturally talk about what is

important to them, and the researcher can visit areas of interest that have not been covered once the participant has “expressed their interpretation of their lived experience”

The intricacies of karma yogis’ experiences emerged as soon as the main question was asked, and this influenced the way the interviews began. Both Yogi A and Yogi B stated ‘wow’, showing surprise at being asked about their experience. Yogi B takes this surprise further, stating “Oh, wow. You are going to make me cry.” Yogi B’s response could show the overpowering nature of the experience, but it would be interesting to look into if it is specific to the experience in question within this study, or if this is a usual event that happens within phenomenological research when beginning the interview process.

Due to the idiographic nature of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, I recruited a small sample of karma yogis. All participants had experience in humanitarian work for at least six months in developing countries as a karma yogi and were of service in relation to the needs of the population. It was difficult to determine if the sample within the study stands for the general population of karma yogis. Thus, the findings are limited since they cannot be generalized to the wider population of karma yogis.

However, the sampling technique I used was in agreement with the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Secondly, Smith (2004) argues that focusing on the particular and the detail of individual experience can bring us as researchers closer to significant aspects of a shared humanity. The study’s strength lies in the depth of the analysis and the insight it provides into the essence of the phenomena being examined. Thirdly, the research in regards to the lived experience of karma yogis as international

peacebuilders provides a context in which I can develop implications and suggestions for future study.

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Within this research, all karma yogis mentioned a life of balance and a mind-body-spirit connection. In future studies, analysis of the connection between identifying a life of balance and karma yogis in the United States may be instrumental in understanding karma yogis in the United States. Karma yogis in the United States are of service in a multitude of areas ranging from trauma, rape, children as well as the military. This study did not capture the life experiences of karma yogis in the United States. Future research can bring about more knowledge that would help narrowing the gap. A quantitative study may bridge the gap by examining challenges of karma yogis in the United States as next steps in forwarding this line of research. In addition, studies can look at the lived experience of the survivors versus the yoga community to understand the actual impact from the perspective of the survivor.

The result of the study would be significant in understanding the social environments of which karma yogis in the United States succeed within. Understanding the beliefs and attitudes of karma yogis in the United States is significant when one considers their existence and efficacy. Moreover, this study is significant because it helps researchers to understand how karma yogis succeed as peacebuilders in the United States.

The superordinate theme ‘Defining the Path of a Peacebuilder’ provides a strong understanding of karma yogis in general. The parallels between the findings of this study and the literature highlight how karma yogis come to peacebuilding. This information

may be useful for peacebuilding professionals when working in the United States or internationally, as it helps them understand their future experiences.

The study involved the lived experiences of karma yogis as international peacebuilders. A qualitative study that focuses on karma yogis in the United States would provide a different perspective. I am recommending that a qualitative study should focus on karma yogis in the United States, because a study that utilizes karma yogis in the United States can offer an alternative perspective relevant to addressing their success in the United States. Lastly, a study that includes the experiences of karma yogis in the United States would help determine how they should manage their success to self-promote. Based on the knowledge and experiences shared by each participant relating to the explored phenomenon, researchers may be able to appreciate and disseminate such knowledge with benefactors for the sake of development of peacebuilding in the United States.

Prior to the study, much of the information regarding the lived experiences of karma yogis as international peacebuilders was not available. Now that the study has dealt with karma yogis, researchers should follow with a quantitative research study to either confirm or reject the conclusions with the survivors within the community. I am recommending that researchers should conduct a quantitative research study that may or may not corroborate with the conclusion of this study. Furthermore, a quantitative study can assess the influence of yoga on peacebuilding nationwide and internationally.

Final Reflections

I used the interview process to understand the lived experiences and insights of karma yogis. The research process that was conducted allowed me to reach a small group of karma yogis by speaking with them in semi structured interviews. This methodology allowed me to focus on depth and intricacies of the experiences of international karma yogis. Prior to collecting the data within the study, I had preconceived notions that karma yogis played a role in the efforts of peacebuilding internationally. In addition, I felt that the results of the research were minimal from my biases and that the results of the study were reliable and valid. In interviewing the participants, the themes that were developed adequately answered all questions that were posed for this study with literature that supported the findings and a theoretical framework.

Summary

This study illuminated the lived experience of karma yogis who volunteered in developing countries as peacebuilders. The purpose of the research was to understand this group of international peacebuilders and their dedication to service which affected the social identity of the yogi. A Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was adopted to address the research aims. Three participants who are yogis were interviewed as to their experiences in regards to being peacebuilders in developing countries. Through conducting and analyzing the interviews, this study revealed the lived experience of karma yogis as international peacebuilders.

The researcher constructed the four superordinate themes. The four superordinate themes represent the lived experience of karma yogis as international peacebuilders, and

the patterns and connections between the emergent subthemes. The four superordinate themes represent an experience shared by the majority of the participants: 'Defining the Path of a Peacebuilder', 'Reviewing the life in a developing country being of service as an international karma yogi', and 'Reflecting on the Identity of an International Karma Yogi'. The experience for karma yogis seemed to be about becoming a peacebuilder and of being of service.

The findings of the study are useful for both researchers and peacebuilding professionals. This research provides a foundation for both the humanitarian/peace building community to validate karma yogis as a real entity in the field that are contributing in ways that are rich and far reaching. In addition, there is inherent meaning generated by this research in the yoga community for broadening the scope of those that are willing to take part in this movement and join karma yogis in helping those across our borders.

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Appendix A: Research Questions

The phenomenon I am focusing on is the lived experience of karma yogis as international peacebuilders.

1. What does it mean to be an international karma yogi?
2. What are the experiences of international karma yogis?
3. What is the identity of the international karma yogi?

Interview Questions- Interview #1

1. What was your background before being a karma yogi?
2. What led you to yoga?
3. What type of yoga do you practice?
4. Tell me what it means to be a yogi.
5. What led you to do international work as a yogi?
6. What countries have you been of service in?
7. How long were you in each country?
8. What is your relationship to the people and country you choose to be of service in?
9. What were the differences/similarities in the various countries?
10. What is your definition of peace?
11. What does being a humanitarian mean to you?
12. How do you differ from other humanitarians?
13. What is your philosophy regarding conflict?
14. What are your thoughts on peacebuilding?
15. How does your yoga practice contribute to this?

16. What does it feel like being a yogi in developing countries? What does it look like to you?
17. How is it different from being a yogi at home?
18. What were some of your greatest influences to do this work?
19. What has affected you the most by being an international karma yogi?
20. What has been the impact on you since you left?
21. What are the larger ramifications of your work?
22. What defines you? What were your unique contributions through this work?
23. How do you see yourself in this role as a peacebuilder?
24. How do you see you impacting conflict in the area and with the people you are helping?

Appendix B: Interview Questions – Interview #2

1. After reviewing the transcripts is there anything you would like to clarify, adjust or expand upon?
2. Who is an international karma yogi?
3. What is your experience with peace from the perspective of an international karma yogi within the region you were in?
4. What is your experience with conflict resolution from the perspective of an international karma yogi within the region you were in?
5. What is the state of conflict in the developing country or countries that you were in?
6. What is the state of peace in the developing country that you were in?
7. How do international karma yogis contribute to the state of peace in a developing country?
8. Has your views on peace and conflict been altered from spending time in a developing country as a karma yogi?
9. How can yoga assist communities in conflict or conflict in general?
10. Has your identity shifted since working in developing countries?
11. What is the relationship between the developing country you were in and yoga?