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Who Am I When I Am Teaching? Self in Yoga Practice

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Abstract

The paper shows the situational transitions between the different identities of a teacher in hatha yoga practice: teacher, instructor, trainee, student, and researcher. The analysis is based on self-reports of my feelings about practicing and teaching hatha yoga. The explication is based on the self-observation of my lived experiences and the observation of interactions with hatha yoga session participants. The self emerges from the interactions or lack of interactions. Sometimes I am a participant, sometimes an instructor, and sometimes a student, even in the same yoga session. I analyze my self-reports using the first-person perspective and third-person mode. There are also descriptions of joint knowledge production with research collaborators who comment and give their insight by writing contemplative memos for me as the principal investigator and yoga teacher about my behaviors and identity.

Keywords

first-person perspective, self-observation, self-analysis, mind, body feelings, emotions, teaching hatha yoga, contemplative studies

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Who Am I When I Am Teaching? Self in Yoga Practice

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The paper shows the situational transitions between the different identities of a teacher in hatha yoga practice: teacher, instructor, trainee, student, and researcher. The analysis is based on self-reports of my feelings about practicing and teaching hatha yoga. The explication is based on the self-observation of my lived experiences and the observation of interactions with hatha yoga session participants. The self emerges from the interactions or lack of interactions. Sometimes I am a participant, sometimes an instructor, and sometimes a student, even in the same yoga session. I analyze my self-reports using the first-person perspective and third-person mode. There are also descriptions of joint knowledge production with research collaborators who comment and give their insight by writing contemplative memos for me as the principal investigator and yoga teacher about my behaviors and identity.

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Our inner chaos and confusion seem to be our most significant wealth. - Olga Tokarczuk

Introduction

First-person reports, such as self-reports, diaries, and autoethnographies, show that descriptions of situations and experiences are also a creation. The objectivity of these descriptions may be the narrator's goal; however, self-analysis indicates that achieving this objectivity is entangled in many cultural, linguistic, and rhetorical meanders. There is also self-presentation of the subject (see Kubica, 2002), and the goal of self-analysis may be to work on oneself (Kubica, 2002, pp. 20, 26; Malinowski, 1989). Writing can transform the writer, which is why it is vital to show this process of knowledge production from the inside. Telling a personal history of knowledge production allows one to discover what is usually hidden (Kacperczyk, 2020, p. 73). It will enable us, at least partially, to question the habits and thinking patterns present in our previously learned scientific procedures and the basic assumptions adopted in the academic world (Szwabowski, 2019, 2021).

In the following self-analysis, I will use the first-person narrative, but also the third-person convention to stand by the side of our lived experiences. On the one hand, it will provide a different layer of perception of one's own experiences (Rambo Ronai, 1995) than the first-person report. On the other hand, it will allow for third-person observation in the form of paraphrasing the analysis of what the narrator experiences. The voices of the main narrator and the author of the text will be joined partially by his research collaborators (doctoral students and participants of the project, Dagmara Tarasiuk and Aleksandra Płaczek) to show that knowledge is also produced collaboratively, even when one person's voice is present or dominant in the narrative and analysis (Ellis & Rawicki, 2013; Pławski et al., 2019).

The participants of the research, discussion, and analysis learn from each other together. It is an attitude of "learning together" or "leregogy" (Rehorick, & Bentz, 2017; Bentz & Marlatt, 2021, p. 10). The student becomes the teacher; the teacher becomes the student. This

often happens in a case assessed as new, chaotic, and full of contradictions (Rehorick & Taylor, 1995; see also Appendix 1 and 2). The acquired knowledge is partial and situated (Denzin, 2013, p. 355) but also “knowledge is experienced and expressed in sensuous terms...” (Denzin, 2019, p. 454). There is consent to chaos and contradictions. We usually look for signs and patterns of social order in observed situations in social sciences. However, the order can be partial or temporary. Order, according to Denzin (2019, p. 455), is an ideological term that can justify the interpretative practices of science.

There are possible moments of silence and downtime during the collaborative learning process (Rehorick & Bentz, 2017, p. 27). Joint maturation is associated with hatching knowledge gradually, though sometimes eruptions and illuminations of new perceptions, reflections, hypotheses, and concepts are possible. It is vital in contemplative research to record and share thoughts (Rehorick & Bentz, 2017, p. 33) and go beyond what is taken for granted. Writing reveals what has been experienced and can be reflexively processed, leading to a transformation of views, attitudes, and/or identity (Pławski et al., 2019; Rehorick & Bentz, 2008; Rehorick & Taylor, 1995). The internal review of interaction ritual chains and our meetings with teachers and significant others could be done through self-reflection (Collins, 2004, p. 397, note 9).

This paper examines the self-observation of sessions led by a hatha yoga instructor, revealing the transition between several different identities: teacher, trainee, student, and researcher. Self-observation is a first-person presentation of my feelings about the practice and teaching of hatha yoga, and the paper presents extended narratives from self-observation (Konecki, 2018, 2022). However, the author will also carry the self-analysis from the first-person, third-person, and impersonal perspectives. It will, in a way, be an external look at one’s own experiences, although it must be remembered that this view is made by the person producing the records of lived experiences. The third-person and impersonal analysis experiment makes it possible to be detached from assumptions, for example, the view that direct and first-person stories about situations and experiences are the only available truth about lived experiences because they come from incidents immediately described.¹

The attempt at self-analysis is juxtaposed with the reflection of the co-researchers of the main narrator. The analysis is carried out in the convention of contemplative sociology (Bentz & Giorgino, 2016; Konecki, 2018, 2021).

I will also use the inspiration of transformational phenomenology (Rehorick & Bentz, 2008). In this convention, researchers make self-observations and record them immediately after experiencing a particular situation. We try to be close to our past experiences. We write about the lived experiences described in the self-reports and contemplative notes (Konecki, 2021), which are a paraphrase and, at the same time, elements of explication of our lived experiences (Richardson, 1992).

There are also records of experiences from the moment of explaining the written auto-reports. Experiencing and communicating about them is a source of knowledge, not only empirical materials (Denzin, 2013, p. 355). In this explication, we also look for explanations from other sources and from our colleagues, students who at this point become our teachers (cf. Rehorick & Taylor, 1995).

In yoga, the relationship between teacher and student is significant. They were initially called guru-siṣya (guru-disciple) relationships. The apprentice would practice with his master for an extended period. It was a direct relationship (the contact was face-to-face), and it was also an individual relationship (one master and a student who was constantly under his

¹ My belief about the advantages of the third-person perspective is based on my phenomenological writing experience. When I use the third person perspective in writing, I look at my lived experiences as my academic colleagues would look. They would have a lot of objectivistic references and remarks, putting the personal experiences in a broad social, political or historical context.

influence). Choosing a qualified guru was crucial for success in yoga (Mallinson & Singleton, 2017). It was not advisable to have other teachers, so there was a solid and direct relationship between the student and the master. The thread of power appears here; the master somehow decided about his student's worldview, lifestyle, and relationship with the world. However, as early as the 20th century, such relationships began to disappear. It comes with the process of the commodification of yoga (De Michelis, 2008). Now, in the 21st century, they are sporadic: "The guru-siṣya (guru-disciple) relationship is often considered an essential aspect of imparting yogic knowledge. However, at the beginning of the 21st century, intensive teaching of yoga one on one, from master to student, is unique" (Newcombe, 2014, p. 147). There was intensive teaching of yoga in groups, which completely changed the relationship between teacher and student (Newcombe, 2014, pp. 153, 161).

In the second half of the twentieth century, the institutionalization of hatha yoga appeared. A guru who usually has charisma, which was also the result of interacting with students, turned the relationships with pupils into formal training that sometimes ended with the bureaucratic approval of competencies to teach yoga. There is no individualized teaching, yoga is conducted in a group, and there is usually no continuous and prolonged contact with the teacher daily. Moreover, the practitioner is never sure if the practitioners are performing the asanas correctly (Sarbacker, 2014, p. 292).

The guru's charisma² is almost mystical; the guru brightens up the darkness; *gu* is darkness, and *ru* is removing this darkness (Williamson, 2014, p. 222). However, according to Max Weber, any charisma ultimately formalizes what Weber calls "charismatic routine," especially when a charismatic leader enters the modes of an organization or creates it himself. The institutionalization of charisma occurs then (Newcombe, 2014, p. 148; Weber, 2012, pp. 367-373). Governance takes the form of rational power/authority, standardized by-laws, and formal regulations.

Institutionalized yoga has its benefits. It is undoubtedly safer when rules related to the health of practitioners and their safety are formalized. The emphasis on safety and avoidance of bodily injuries has been exceptionally high in Iyengar's school (Newcombe, 2014, p. 158). Secondly, there is also some formal safeguard against abusing guru practitioners. Often these relationships were very tense, and sometimes they were even violent on the part of the master (Singleton & Fraser, 2014, p. 103, see also footnote 3).

It is therefore difficult to talk about the existence of a guru-disciple relationship today, especially in Western countries. The teacher is replaced by an instructor who has received the appropriate certification from some organization to teach a specific type of yoga, and these certifications replace charisma. However, the lineage is still relevant here, that is, where these certifications come from. This change of roles, from a charismatic teacher in a direct relationship with the individual learner to an instructor, raises many questions: are we dealing today with a teacher or instructor of hatha yoga? Who is the instructor today during the hatha yoga sessions? Is she/he a practitioner or teacher? Probably both. But which accents prevail then? When does he/she pass from one identity to another? Is she/he also a teacher imparting some aspects of traditional yoga knowledge? How is the knowledge about yoga transmitted according to the first-person narration? How does the mind of the teacher work? What role does she/he take on? Is she/he only a teacher, or maybe she/he also learns from his pupils? Is the knowledge that comes from the masters embodied? I would also like to show how the knowledge on yoga practice is collectively produced in the research project? I want to show it by experimenting with the first-person and third-person narration and receiving the comments from collaborators in the project. The evocative expressions of the subject are commented by

² Charisma is understood after Weber as having unique personality traits that are the basis of achievements, and unique insight into reality, as well as an enormous influence on others, thus gaining power over them based on authority (Weber, 2012, pp. 367-373)

the third person comments used by the subject to make the distance to the role of the teacher. The experiment concerns writing about the practice of yoga; it is a dialogue between “Me” and “I” (Mead 1934; Wiley 2003; Blumer 2004) as it is sedimented in written reflection.

From the self-observation presented below, one can see that the identities of the instructor and the practitioner are fluid. They are social constructs connected with ordering reality, but this is from the point of view of an external observer, not a practicing hatha yoga instructor at that moment. I am describing my engagement in yoga as a practitioner here and now instructor. Therefore, in yoga sessions, I switch between at least two identities. I am never tied to one self-identification for too long. I also want to practice as a full participant to get something from the asanas. Still, when fully engaged in my practice, I suddenly see some incorrectly-done exercises by participants, and I switch to instructor identity.

There is also another significant identity: that of the student. The teacher also learns by teaching others. By observing practitioners’ reactions and getting feedback during and after classes, she/he learns and changes the way she/he leads the pupils and her/his behavior is also meaningful here; she/he introduces new elements, becomes cautious, and learns to recognize the weaknesses of others. This third identity, being a student while learning from pupils, is at work, but it is not always made aware, as an analysis of my auto-reports reveals. It should also be emphasized that the frequently-criticized subjectivity of statements and self-reflection may be an advantage of the researcher because she/he often reaches unspoken feelings, and the subject is a socialized unit. Writing about oneself is also writing about others (Gunnarsson, 2021, p. 105).

Moreover, writing itself changes us; it is a transforming element (Rehorick & Bentz, 2008). The record is a performance of what has been experienced; it shapes our testimony of the experience and makes it available (see Wolcott, 2008). The notation, writing style, phraseology, and vocabulary are given, but the choice of words and writing style is individual. The experience with the record is an expression of our relationship to the world here and now. Does writing change our experiences? It changes and does not change at the same time. It is part of a holistic experience of the world. Even anticipating what will be written during self-observation is a holistic experience. Predicting what will be written, evidence of the writing, and the written report itself, if used, are parts of the process of experiencing the world.

It is also vital to consider “who writes and for whom”? (Denzin, 2019, p. 462). What is described below was written for the author himself and the hatha yoga practitioners to better understand what is going on in hatha yoga. It is best to understand together in the process of collective learning from your own body and your own and shared practice.

And when does an instructor become a teacher? The teacher can also introduce spiritual threads, and then she/he becomes a kind of quasi-guru, a spiritual teacher if that is what the practitioners define it.³ However, in general, the latter role and the identity assigned to it seem to be rarely introduced into the practice of hatha yoga (Konecki, p. 2015). If this happens, it enters unnoticed, slides in with the help of single words, phrases, gestures, or the names of

³ However, the title of guru is reserved for very significant yoga teachers. Either they create some school or some yoga lineage. Usually, they are big names, and I will mention just a few: Swami Vivekananda, Shri Yogendra, Krishnamacharya, Pattabhi Jois, and B. K. S. Iyengar. These figures have had a tremendous influence on the formation of yoga practice in the modern world and they have also influenced the justifications of yoga practices in the past. However, in contemporary society, the role of the guru is changing as a result of adapting to the new cultural, social, economic, and technological conditions in which yoga is taught (Singleton & Goldberg, 2014, pp. 1-3). It comes closer to the role of an expert based on scientific evidence about the effects of yoga on the mind and body than to the guru’s philosophy, that is, traditional religious and ethical justifications (Singleton & Goldberg, 2014, pp. 6-7).

certain Sanskrit positions (e.g., the name of the asana: savasana, which means corpse position).⁴ This name can be perceived by practitioners in an aura of some mystery, heralding something extraordinary, out of the ordinary, or supernatural. But it requires this interpretation on the part of practitioners and the yoga teacher's unique personality traits and authority among the practitioners.

This interpretation occurs automatically and is not always consciously controlled by the instructor/teacher who transmits the knowledge that she/he once mastered and which is simply about performing asanas and naming them in a specific and long-established way. Moreover, having certain personality traits and authority, she/he influences her/his behavior and knowledge of others.

Research on teaching the physical practice, as in sport, concentrated mainly on the external side of knowledge transfer and learning (Jakubowska, 2017). There was also an analysis of the social and cultural determinants of the body's physical possibilities and acquired habitus (Bourdieu, 1990). Moreover, teaching and learning are interactional processes analyzed in the past (Jakubowska, 2017; Okita, 2012).

Generally, the phenomenon of an absent body is common in Western societies; we do not feel the body during everyday life or in teaching or learning (Leder, 1990). The practice of yoga helps to get the body back to our consciousness and even give it agency. I want to add some experiential dimension to analyze this process, experiences connected with the feelings of the body (Samudra, 2008). I want to show how the teacher moves between different selves to accommodate the teaching situation, learning and shifting identifications while experiencing the body and how his teaching is embodied (Budgeon, 2003). We can see that the embodiment of the self is not only culturally determined (Crossley, 2001; Csordas, 1990) but also situationally constructed by the subject; in our case, by the instructor or practitioner.

Method: My Way.

My inspiration for explicating the lived experiences during the teaching process comes from transformative phenomenology (Rehoric & Bentz, 2008) and the phenomenological perspective on embodiment (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 1968). The contemplative perspective in social research has also been used (Bentz & Giorgino, 2016; Giorgino, 2015; Konecki, 2022). The movement of the body can be mindfully observed in hatha yoga sessions while teaching: "Our bodily experience of movement is not a particular case of knowledge; it provides us with a way to access the world and the object, with a 'praktognosia,' which has to be recognized as original and perhaps as primary" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 162).

I base the explications and conclusions mainly on my self-reports from conducting hatha yoga sessions for the research participants. Research project has had the title: "Experiencing corporeality and gestures in the social world of hatha yoga: Meanings and

⁴ The use of asana names to refer to the traditions of Hindu culture and religion was, for example, for Iyengar, a form of discursivizing his origin from the old masters/gurus of hatha yoga. This tradition was evoked precisely through the language and names, as well as the legends, stories, and myths to which they relate:

"The burgeoning number of āsanās presented in *Light on Yoga* – his path-breaking book on postural yoga that first appeared in 1966 – may well be a reminiscence of the halcyon days of thousands of āsanās, which are, rather suggestively, named for figures from classical Hindu mythology, including deities and sages. Not only are the āsanās so named, however, but Mr. Iyengar's discourses and writings are similarly bursting with such references. It is in the names of the āsanās, however, and in his personal presence that Mr. Iyengar's empiricism becomes indistinguishable from his spiritual authority, from his power as a guru" (Smith & White, 2014, p. 125; De Michelis, 2004, p. 256).

However, an open invocation to religion in yoga teaching was no longer indicated by one of the yoga gurus, Krishnamacharya. His teaching was universal despite his private, firm religious commitment and solid religious inspiration, for example, in interpreting pranayama (Singleton & Fraser, 2014, p. 99).

knowledge transfer in body practice.” (Sponsored by National Science Center in Poland, Opus, grant number 2018/29/B/HS6/00513).

I had the two research collaborators, doctoral students, and participants of the project, Dagmara Tarasiuk, and Aleksandra Płaczek, who commented on my self-reports and contemplative memos. This way, I got an external perspective on my subjective narrations about yoga practice and teaching. The researchers have also been included in this process. I have been a certified hatha yoga instructor of physical recreation and a professor of sociology; Dagmara Tarasiuk has been a hatha yoga beginner and Ph.D. sociology student; Aleksandra Płaczek has been a hatha yoga beginner and Ph.D. student of sociology. All three of us are from Lodz University. Each of us has had a different embodiment in the lifeworld; we are significantly different in age and have different life and career perspectives, places of origin, and places of living.

We could get distance and be at the research situation as fully and profoundly as possible. By dialogue and adding the contemplative analysis and writing contemplative memos, we can see how our mind works in the research process (Konecki, 2022, pp. 42-44). The contemplative memos help bracket our presuppositions and see what is going on in our minds and bodies.

The research participants were recruited from practitioners of hatha yoga. They were recruited as volunteers, mainly from Lodz (19 practitioners). Some of them also practiced in schools of hatha yoga. The majority were women and beginners. All participants had at least a bachelor's degree and we can say they were middle class.

The other group that participated in the research was the international students of the Erasmus program at the University of Lodz (54 students: summer semester, 2021 and summer semester, 2022). Participation in the research did not influence the students' grades. Informed consent was obtained from all participants in the project. They were treated as collaborators of the researcher, not as external objects of the study. The values of equality, human respect, and empathic understanding were the basis for the interactions with the participants. For the analysis, the authors used only those data the participants consented to use in the phenomenological explication and publication.

Fifty unstandardized, in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted, which were transcribed and analyzed according to the contemplative grounded theory methodology (Konecki 2022). Direct observations of yoga practices were also conducted, totaling 55 hours. There were also about eight hours of video recordings (465.5 min).

I want to show, in this paper, mainly my perspective on teaching and learning. The self-reports resemble autoethnographies (Ellis, 2001; Ellis et al., 2010), but they are not autoethnographies. The self-observation was directed by instruction; we had to observe our thoughts, bodies, feelings, and emotions mindfully as they came during the practice. We had to write down our observations directly after the yoga practice. There has been more guided observation and writing than autoethnography (Konecki, 2022). However, the inspiration for introspective writing about our feelings and lived experiences comes from autoethnography, especially concerning dialogical relations between research participants (Ellis & Rawicki, 2013; Ellis et al., 2018). In this research, the dialogue with the research collaborators could be observed in contemplative memos and researchers' reactions to them. The meaning of teaching and learning is achieved in interactions.

First, I present below my self-observations as **a teacher**, and later I analyze them to find the main themes of the lived experiences, how they influence me, how my mind works, and how I am changing during and after the session. I also wrote about what I had not experienced or noticed at the moment of observation and self-reporting. Changing the style of writing to the imaginary third-person perspective helps to get distance and then reflect on the lived experiences in a more "objective" way, that is, by using the language of the external

descriptions, we come to the perspective of the other as we internalized it in the academic socialization (Me, in George H. Mead's sense of the self-concept). Finally, I am getting the response of my collaborators to my contemplative memos, and I can see my subjectivity in the light of the group thinking about the process of my thought and feeling.

Later, I changed to **individual practice** and repeated the self-observation, self-analysis, and getting the response from my collaborators. I also sometimes shifted the writing style from the first-person to the third-person perspective.

Finally, I changed my status to **a participant** in a yoga session. While observing the other instructor's work, I described my feelings. I changed my perspective during the practice when the teacher's mind was often evoked in me (comparison mode and assessment attitude). There are also my imaginary third-person perspective notes and comments from my collaborators about my self-descriptions and contemplative memos.

Self-Observations and their Self-Analysis

In the text below, I analyzed 25 of my self-observations (for how to make a self-observation, see Konecki, 2018) from January to September 2020. To begin with, I would like to present one of the self-observations from when I conducted a yoga session and gave instructions on how to perform specific asanas.⁵ It is a self-observation that includes, in my opinion, the most critical elements of my yoga practice. Then I will try to analyze what I did during these sessions. I carried out this analysis eight months after the self-observation, so I no longer remember what happened during the session; I only relied on the written text. Generally, when I look back now, without the help of the following self-observation records, past events and feelings merge into one proceeding, with no clear markers to remember what happened during the yoga session more than a week, or at most, two weeks previously.

I analyze first-person documents mainly in the first-person style of narration, sometimes impersonally, from the point of view of a third person – although it is still me (my interpretation of first-person appearances). Referring to yourself in the third person is an interesting rhetorical maneuver in many types of texts, such as in a diary. It can also be a psychotherapeutic treatment when the subject tries to distance himself by referring to the self as a stranger. In the literature on the subject, this procedure is known as “illeism.”⁶ This treatment is also used in *jñāna yoga* to get out of the body and look at it from an external perspective: that of the eternal soul (Ataman) being freed from the body. She/he is free and looks at the lifeworld from a distance. We will use this yogic inspiration here in our yogic research project. In this analysis, we will also try to look at ourselves from an external perspective, writing about ourselves impersonally or from an imaginary third-person perspective. It is an experiment that allows us to see direct first-person auto-reports from the point of view of the first person because she/he is constantly speaking; it is the same subject, but with the use of a thought experiment, that is, imagining himself as a stranger. We omit here the esoteric aspects of this procedure, using only its epistemic advantages, that is, the possibility of the subject distancing himself from himself and, in the same account, discussing his own experiences. In addition, it is also important not to get attached to the assumptions and the

⁵ I am a certified instructor of physical recreation in the hatha yoga specialty.

⁶ <https://aeon.co/ideas/why-speaking-to-yourself-in-the-third-person-makes-you-wiser> [retrieved September 20, 2020] - The writing about everyday life in the third person helps in a more rational approach to life. This is the conclusion from psychological research: “The current work showed that wisdom is not the purview of just a few fortunate individuals. Utilizing the ancient practice of distanced self-reflection, we demonstrated that referring to oneself in the third person during repeated reflections on daily events affords a more expansive self-focus, in turn facilitating wiser reasoning. The results from two field experiments suggest that training distanced self-reflection can bolster wise reasoning in everyday life” (Grossman et al., 2019, p. 29).

desire that first-person reports are the only truth about experiences because they come from almost immediately described first-person experiences.

Self-Observation/Self-Report – Krzysztof T. Konecki – January 28, 2020; Conducting a Session

In practice, we opened the throat chakra (*Vishuddha*). I made a short introduction to the chakra, which is responsible for communication and self-expression, that the color blue is essential and affects the thyroid gland. We started in *badha konasana*, then with our arms back.

I usually think briefly about the session in advance. It is usually generally planned. But in the process, new items come to mind that match the previous one, and I turn them on. For example, they fit the opening of the chest and throat.

The three most important positions for opening the throat chakra that I have used are *halasana*, *salamba sirsasana*, and *matsyasana*. We also made a warrior directly from the rider's position—lots of a dog facing down. There was also a lot of stretching. Stretching relieves tension. I felt a lot of choking in the candle pose. I compared it to the old days when I always felt a stranglehold, but not as much as today.

Halfway through the class, I looked at my watch, 6:35 pm (the session lasts from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm). There is still time to do a few exercises while lying down. So, I control not only the positions of the participants but also the duration of the session. Arch position, hip extension to the sides. I have the impression that careful control of everything happening in the room is part of the instructor's job. His attention is outside, sometimes only on his own body. When I stay in a position longer, I can only turn inward for a moment.

As I read the self-reports of the project participants, these readings began to influence me as a teacher. I began to pay more attention directly to individual participants. I helped with the poses, paid attention to detail. However, I still give general instructions on asanas, and I practice with others. I also want to exercise myself, influence my own body with asanas. However, I pay attention to the exercisers, but from my place on the mat. This, of course, interferes with focusing on my own body; but still being on my mat and not moving, the positions can be done by me, and the positions of others can be corrected and controlled. I talk a lot, pay attention to details in poses. I repeat the same thing every class with the same positions. I shouldn't be talking that much. One day I have to do wordless classes without talking and without this technical chatter. But it's too early. I must teach them more.

Finally, we did savasana. I turned off the light. There was a better mood than usual with the light. I controlled the time and looked at the clock twice to finish at 7:00 pm and not exceed this time. Dagmara was leaving early, and I wanted her to end together with everyone else. There were 10 minutes of savasana in total. Time passed very quickly. During savasana, I was very agitated. I felt high blood pressure, which could be because I forgot to take my blood pressure pills in the morning. However, the stimulation could also result from the intensity of exercise and stimulating asanas. And before that, a double espresso.

I concentrated on my breathing, counting to ten. I could focus quickly, although it felt like giving myself a firm command: count and do not pay attention to anything. I felt strength and determination in my body. Not in my

mind. I counted on and off. I paid attention to the stimulation of the body. I was aware of this. Body sensation: ready to act, to spring, the whole body alert, muscles prepared to contract at any moment, but mainly the sense of agitation passed into the head and the hearts. It's hard for me to describe it. One universal word comes to my mind, agitation. What is it really? Does everyone feel the same?

Finally, after completing *savasana*, I ask: how are we feeling? Usually the same answers: good. For one of the participants, it took a long time. Cezary was also excited; he told me so. Me too... So, a community of experiences, expressed verbally and openly, though for a moment and with one person..."

**A contemplative note summarizing the main topic of the above session:
“Concentration on instructions and the transfer of technical knowledge.”**

The yoga session is usually thought out. I know what I'm going to do, though not exactly; there's a bit of spontaneity to it. And if the plan is not prepared, I have my scheme in the “stock of knowledge at hand,” which I usually use then. This knowledge is obvious to me, and it results from my biography as an instructor. The scheme is based on the “Sun Salutation” sequence, but it is more elaborate and accurate, and slow, with long stops in individual positions.

Even though I sometimes put into the session esoteric threads, such as the knowledge of chakras, in my self-observation of practices in which I am a teacher, I see a lot of technical descriptions: What have I done? How and what can I improve? So I am mainly an instructor, but in self-observation, I call myself a teacher. This name appeared naturally, although now analyzing my notes, I can see that I am probably only an instructor, not a teacher. However, in these moments, I am also a student because I am learning from practitioners; they make these corrections.

Esoteric and spiritual threads are not the most important things. I watch asana practitioners. I wonder what they are feeling. I infer their feelings from my feelings, but I'm not entirely sure if my intuitions are correct. There is also controlling the time of the session, primarily devoted to specific phases of the yoga session, to *pranayama* and *savasana*. In addition, I keep wondering how to improve the practice (“I shouldn't be talking so much.”). I try to leave a few minutes for *savasana*, which I consider an essential element of the practice, physically and mentally closing and summing up what we have achieved during the asanas. There are few references to observing my feelings. Only when any problems arise (choking in the plow position).

Moreover, during *savasana*, I am aware of my feelings; then, I can only observe my feelings, not focus on others, although sometimes I think about what they are feeling at that moment. There is generally no time for this during the session. My thoughts are on what I do and how to do asanas concerning the individual practitioners and their possible reception of the instructions and demonstration.

An interesting observation in the above self-observation is **that one's psycho-physical state may influence the course of the session**. The instructor's intense stimulation may affect the so-called “Hard practice,” in which he offers exercise and long-term asanas to be performed. Also, if the

instructor does not feel well, the practice is conducted differently than usual. Here is an example of such a situation from another day:

“Today, I was right after a massage. I decided to have a massage because my spine and lumbar region have been hurting for several days. It turned out that I still have tension in the area of the shoulder blades and a painful lumbar region. During my practice, I was tired from the massage.

I did a short introduction about meditation and pranayama. I said that you have to prepare yourself technically well for exercises (aids, space, etc.), especially meditation, so as not to get distracted during the practice.

So, the session was light. I did not make any twists or postures that involved tilting the spine. I informed the practitioners about the light practice. In the tutorial, I talked about being light in doing asanas, not tensing up, and doing it freely and lightly. Which I also used to do.”

I turn on third-person mode for analysis.

If Konecki felt and remembered what he wrote above, his body must have had **intense bodily sensations**. It may have been his stomachache, pain in his backbone, or some other part of his body, but they were also remembered in the context of his instruction and knowledge of the practice:

Today, I did the forward bends again. I ate two and a half hours before my yoga session. I also drank some water before practicing. And I started my session with bending. I was pressing on my stomach, and I felt sick, just like I thought it would be ☹️

I also had the impression that I had made a mistake and did not do one batch of exercises on one side. But I wasn't sure; it occupied my attention for a while.

I still feel my stomach full—no more eating before a session. Four hours' break minimum! (Self-report, May 12, 2020).

At the end of the session, Konecki usually asks the question, “How are you feeling?” He expects practitioners to share their impressions and reflections with him. Practitioners usually share casually, responding that they feel good, and sometimes respond more broadly, as in the first example above, when Konecki was told about the distortions in the perception of time and stimulation during the hatha yoga session.

A similar concentration of the instructor on instruction occurs in the breathing exercise, *pranayama*. The instructor is still in the role, and his mind becomes that of the instructor. Here is an example confirming this observation from Konecki's yoga session on another day:

I did pranayama. As usual, introductory ujjayi followed by viloma with breath-hold for two times on inhalation and four times on exhalation. The following pranayama was inhaled four times and exhaled twice. I recommended lightness when inhaling, which I used to do. I felt a lot of relaxation during and after the pranayama.

Then I did the meditation (19 minutes) for those who wanted to meditate, and those who wanted to lie in savasana were doing savasana. I gave some

instruction again to savasana and meditation. I saw that only K. was sitting. The rest of the people were in savasana.

Need for a Response, Need for Interaction.

I see the need for practitioners to react to what I say and do, especially in online hatha yoga. Since March 2020, I have been running an online course due to the COVID19 epidemic. We could not meet in person, so we were in contact via the internet live using Zoom or Skype platforms. In the following self-observation, **I focused on the issue of perceptions and reactions without being sure what they are.** I expressed this in a comment summarizing my self-observation.

While giving the asana instruction, I couldn't see my performance or the performance of the participants. I tried to talk a lot and give precise instructions so that the participants would follow them and do the asanas correctly. Due to the lack of interaction, I asked Dagmara twice if I was online and visible. In general, I trusted the zoom.us technology, but I did not trust my router because the wi-fi range in the small room where I was doing the online session is not very good.

Conducting the hatha yoga without any response was a bit of a challenge for me...

And the whole online session was focused on one thought: Do they hear or see or exercise? The lack of direct contact is a severe limitation to the teacher. When I compare it with yesterday's online meditation, when I saw the instructor and I was only a participant, it was much better for me to meditate (Self-observation, Krzysztof T. Konecki, March 17, 2020).

Asanas were a bit difficult for me because I was already practicing yoga from noon, and I was a bit tired. In addition, I lack self-vision and confidence if they see me, and how do they see me? And the second thing, I don't see the participants, which also bothers me. They had their cameras on today, but I didn't see much anyway. The biggest problem with online classes is the lack of direct contact in the same physical space. And it bothered me (Self-report, Krzysztof T. Konecki, on-line session, April 7, 2020).

One day, in online hatha yoga,⁷ I decided that all of the practitioners should have their cameras turned on. I wanted to see them, and **I had a strong need for eye contact with them.** I wanted to know what they were doing at a given moment:

⁷ Some people positively evaluate the development of technology and its use in yoga practice, for example, in Bhakti yoga. The internet allows you to stay in touch with a guru-teacher. Practitioners can express their bhakti to the guru by frequently interacting with him (Warrier, 2014, p. 309). This contact is vital for the practitioners to adhere to the guru: "The Amma websites, by keeping devotees constantly mindful of and attuned to the guru and her movements, serve to affirm the guru's place at the center of their spiritual lives. Second, it secures for devotees a virtual place at the very heart of the global devotional cyber-community centered on this guru, thus allowing a translocal shared experience of *bhakti yoga* unfettered by spatial distance and separation. And finally, it sustains a virtual as well as real devotional network that can readily be mobilized at the guru's behest, not least for fundraising and relief efforts when disasters strike. This was the case, for instance, when Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf of Mexico in 2005; it was so again when the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami ravaged Japan in 2011." (Warrier, 2014, p. 320).

I asked the practitioners to turn on their cameras because I do classes better when I see the practitioners. And it was true; there was contact, I felt it. Of course, I didn't see exactly how they perform the positions, but I saw what point of the pose they are at. And it was a great help for me. For example, I could wait for Luiza to bring exercise accessories. (Self-report, online session, May 12, 2020)

The need for eye contact with the instructor may result from the didactic requirements, and it **ensures total participation** of individual people in the exercises:

I asked them to turn on the cameras so we could see each other. Being in a group motivates; the awareness that others can see us is also a form of control during meditation. We are not supposed to move, sleep, or go to the toilet if we do not have the camera on.

Sometimes the response and the observation of the face can be disturbing; for example, in the transmission of knowledge of the spiritual aspects, although in the case described below, they related to doing asanas anyway. I had some concerns about whether the narrative of hatha yoga philosophy would be well received when certain spiritual aspects were discussed. I was aware of the cultural differences regarding the perception of hatha yoga (Singleton, 2010a, 2010b). Full of apprehension, I joined this lecture at the beginning of my yoga session. Without seeing faces, and thus the reception of my mini-lecture, I was able to lead it freely, even if the reception was not very favorable. This is how I made it up. But I wasn't sure if this perception was negative or positive until the end. I kept thinking about it. I didn't see the faces of the practitioners:

Today, I did the classes online again, this time with a lecture on *Yamas* in yoga (*Ahimsa, Sathya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, Aparigraha*) and doing asanas and physical exercises to relax the cervical and thoracic spine.

I mentioned *Yamas* with some reserve because I do not know if this thread of the Eastern philosophy and spirituality of yoga will discourage the practitioners. However, I did this to show that asanas are just a fraction, 1/8 of yoga. Moral principles are fundamental, and they can also be exercised in asanas. I was applying certain principles to some examples of asanas. For instance, greed is not yogic; that seeking pleasure in yoga and following the pleasure principle is not hatha yoga. *Ahimsa* is about not hurting others or ourselves. Also, we do not do anything by force during the hatha yoga sessions, but according to what the body tells us (according to the truth of the body – *Sathya*). These principles, applied in doing asanas, can be carried over into the routine of everyday life.

I have never given such a lecture, but I decided to introduce yoga to the practitioners at some moment. Maybe the fact that I didn't see their expressions and faces was not discouraging for me, and I had more courage to pass this knowledge directly.” (Self-report, April 7, 2020.)

A brief introduction to *Ishvara pranidhana*. I did not want to talk about God, so I was talking about humility and surrendering to fate. This can also be done in asana by surrendering to the body, observing it, and following its signals. It is a preparation for humility and submission to fate (Self-report, May 12, 2020).

Moving to the Third-Person Perspective

Krzysztof Konecki's reactions to the asana performance are somewhat subdued, and he never scolds the participants. He tries to talk generally about asana techniques. In the course of the yoga session, it also communicates possible psychophysical states regarding the feelings of the body and mind. He tries to show the relationship between body and thinking. In addition, at this point, based on his observations of the work of other instructors or teachers and his own, he may state that there are different styles of doing hatha yoga. It may be, for example, an authoritative or subdued style. So, he shared it and thought that his style of conducting hatha yoga is subdued; it is not known if he believes it himself, but at the moment, he thinks so:

I generally avoid intense and individualized corrections. I don't want to scare the participants. I typically say how an item should be done. I also mention body sensations and the relationship of different feelings to each other in different parts of the body. I presented two tactics of dealing with the tensions and resistance of the body, mainly the psyche. Smiling and focusing on your breathing helps to break your body's resistance. The relaxation that comes from the head relaxes the muscles. Although I do not know how it happens, it helps to forget about the body's resistance that arises because the mind says, "I can't," "it will not work." The body and mind relax at the same time and contract at the same time. A smile is essential for this. Tightening the facial muscles tenses the mind simultaneously, and the mind tenses the muscles. If the whole body is tense, it will not do the asana well. (Self-observation, Krzysztof T. Konecki, February 11, 2020).

Now I would like to present the interpretation of my self-observation made by my collaborator, Aleksandra Płaczek. It draws attention to the teacher's uncertainty and his distance from the practitioners. This reflection drew my attention because keeping this distance was natural for me but not perceptible (Zerubavel, 2015). The second thing that caught my attention was Alexandra's use of the form "professor." Using this form of address in this context indicates a specific relationship with the tutor. It may indicate the social distance between the teacher and the practitioner (participant of the research project), but it may also be a power relationship.⁸ My third observation here is that I am giving a choice of how to close the session of yoga, either savasana or meditation. So, in a yoga session, there is a certain freedom of choice, although it is generally carried out according to my exact instructions and within certain limits.

I give the voice of my co-workers here without commenting on what one of them wrote because it is an analytical note, which is also a paraphrase of my self-observation and self-

⁸ When I asked Alexandra, who is both a colleague in the study and a student, about the matter, she found that using this form of address was helpful to her in replacing the consistently appearing wording from the teacher. This would indicate that the power relationship was not directly perceived by it, but that does not mean it was not there.

After a second question, there was a reflection on this. It turned out that power relations do exist. I also asked if this distance affects how she is describing my feelings. Aleksandra wrote back to me as follows: "I think [the power distance] might have been disturbing at the very beginning of the collaboration, the hatha yoga sessions, and writing self-observation. But soon, any embarrassment faded away. My reports are honest, and I describe without hesitation what I feel and think. I feel very comfortable when writing reports because I know that nothing will be taken wrongly, and it is such a moment that allows for even more colloquial expression of thoughts. It is more about learned distance in addressing each other, but it does not significantly affect the content of the auto-reports." (e-mail communication, October 18, 2020).

analysis (see Richardson, 1992): *Let the note speak for itself*, although it will never speak for itself, because there is a narrator behind it, talking in a particular context:

A Professor as an Instructor.

While reading the professor's self-observation, what immediately came to my mind was thinking about others, caring for others. The professor, as the lecturer, pays a lot of attention to the transfer of knowledge beyond physical knowledge, apart from the asanas themselves. He wants to precede his yoga session with lectures on his philosophy of living in accordance with his body and mind. I noticed that the classes were not introduced at the beginning of the teaching, but after a series of sessions, after getting to know the participants and gaining confidence, exploring the group's ground. Nevertheless, the professor is still reluctant to say everything, and he shortens some lectures for fear of alienating the participants. This means that there is still some barrier and uncertainty between him and the participants. In speeches and statements, he is helped by the form of the classes, that is, online yoga. He does not see the complete reactions of the participants, so he feels more confident and does not feel embarrassed during the speech, pointing out that in the case of live hatha yoga, this uncertainty could take a deeper, more abundant form. The set of asanas is selected by the teacher mainly in terms of his well-being. If another effort precedes it, or if the tutor does not feel well, the practice is lighter, less demanding.

The yoga session is planned, usually directed to the specific needs of the body/health. During the exercise, the tutor adds new items that suddenly come to his mind and are related to the lesson's theme. So, the plan of the session is flexible and not rigidly held.

The tutor focuses on what is outside during the yoga session – he observes the participants, space, and time. Time is constantly monitored, even during the relaxation, the calming part of the session. The leader cares about the atmosphere of the meetings and also adjusts the lighting to them. This prevents the tutor from focusing on himself, his body, and his mind. Attention is drawn inward only during longer kept asanas. However, the facilitator expresses the need to focus on oneself.

Asking the participants about their well-being during and after the sessions establishes understanding and contact, which results from the need for a sense of community. When one of the participants presents similar observations as the tutor about body sensations and emotions, the instructor becomes confident and focuses on it.

The instructor tries to discuss all the positions and give tips to the practitioners – how they should feel during the asanas, how they should breathe. Sometimes he offers participants a choice of the form of exercise, the phase of the session, so that they can adapt it to their well-being (the choice between *savasana* and meditation).

During online hatha yoga, the cameras and the tutor-practitioner contact are of the utmost significance. The facilitator feels uncertainty during the yoga session when the practitioners have their cameras turned off. The lack of interaction makes the teacher ask about the technical aspects of the practice (whether they can see or hear it). He recognizes that being on the other side is entirely different, and it is easier for the practitioner; it is not such a huge obstacle. The active cameras give the presenter a feeling of confidence. Hence, the request to turn on the cameras becomes an indispensable part of the exercise.

The instructor avoids individualized corrections – it results from reflecting on the well-being of the participants, not wanting to scare them, harm them, or embarrass them (Aleksandra Płaczek).

Individual Practice and the Teacher as a Participant

Individual Practice

Moving to the Third-Person Perspective.

He was practicing individually, without an instructor, alone. Then Krzysztof Konecki tries to return to himself, to his body. He observes the sensations, but he also plans how to do the following session when he is the facilitator. In general, individual practice is necessary for him to feel the taste of yoga, its strength, peace, and mood, which combines all the elements of this world. Through the body, he can feel a connection with the material and animate world. He often does it to lighten the mood and even try to get out of depression (see the contemplative memo below, which he wrote after practice).⁹ Frequently, his body chooses specific asanas and ignores some. His body is the subject of the activities. What he does and what happens during the hatha yoga session is described in an observation-reflection note.

Memo – reflection after individual practice – January 1, 2020

Today, while practicing hatha yoga at home, I made my Sun Salutation the starter kit as usual. These are slow-motion Sun Salutation positions made from different variants of this traditional Sun Salutation. However, the sequence of asanas and their logic is generally preserved and can be found in different versions (namaste and *tadasana*, *urdwa hastasana*, *uttanasana*, *ashva salanchasana*, *kumbhakasana*, *chaturanga dandasana*, *bhujangasana*, *adho mukha svanasana*, *ashva salanchasana* again, *uttanasana* again, *urdwa hastasana* again, *tadasana* and *namaste* again). I composed this set myself, although, as I mentioned, it is based on the Sun Salutation sequence. I perform this sequence very slowly, extending the duration of a single asana. The entire sequence takes up to 10 minutes or more. Performing this set stretches muscles and tendons well, elevates my mood, exercises my strength, and gives me confidence. These are my conclusions from my observations. I work well with this set in the morning afterward.

⁹ There is some evidence from medical research that hatha yoga has therapeutic value in combating depression, although further research is needed to fully confirm this hypothesis (Uebelacker et al., 2010).

Today I was doing other asanas first, and I wanted to skip this sacramental set of mine, but I was drawn to doing it. And at the end of the yoga session, I finally did it.

Recently, I have had difficulties motivating myself to do yoga. It was hard for me to bring myself to hatha yoga. You could say, in short, that I had a severe mood drop.

After doing this set, I found a bunch of asanas for depression on the internet today. It turned out that of the six proposed asanas, four are in my collection (*urdva hastasana*, *adho mukha svanasana*, *bhujangasana*, *uttanasana*), while the other two are always in my set of asanas (*virabhadrasana II*, *balasana*) – *balasana* before the basic set and after it, and *virabhadrasana* always after the basic set. I composed this set of mine long ago, and I always use it when teaching hatha yoga. It works great for your well-being and prepares you for further exercise. I checked it on myself and later on the exercisers. And it works; these are my reactions from people who have been exercising for many years.

It turns out that my body made the choice I made a long time ago because I was practicing what helped me feel better. This is what I liked the most. Somehow these asanas popped up naturally in my individual practice. They are exercises that require a lot of physical effort, build endurance (hence my rather long positioning). They also are asanas for relaxation, such as pranayama and meditation at the end of the yoga session. My body chose this sequence (wishing to exercise and stay in shape); the mind merely followed those choices (wishing then to relax and calm down). I didn't realize it. Although in yoga, I was mainly looking to calm my mind and develop my knowledge about the Eastern techniques of working on the mind (motives for), it turned out that this body guided my choices. Although these asanas were given to me on a tray, their order and "manner" (I mean focusing the mind on certain parts of the body, the length of time in a position, breathing, and concentration on breaths) were almost entirely invented by me, albeit with some borrowings, from what I read and learned from X and other teachers.

However, it also comes to mind that there are generally asanas in hatha yoga that help with all ailments and that are suitable for all developments of the body, mind, and heart (emotionality). However, the body may have selective attention here and make choices about the type of exercise. This may also be choosing the teacher or leaving some teachers/trainers. Perhaps there is a question about tuning the same sensitivity of bodies or their states at any given moment.

In individual practice, Konecki has a better focus on the sensations of his own body, and he may better name these sensations, even if they are atypical, which is what he usually experiences:

Today, when I pulled my arms back, lacing my thumbs on the back, I felt the stretch of my muscles across my chest. As if a piece of paper was being stretched across the chest. From the breastbone to the sides of the body. Weird feeling (Self-observation, Individual practice at home, August 18, 2020; 8.30 pm.).

By practicing, Krzysztof himself can observe what “stretching” is and penetrate it deeper. It is not enough for him to name the feeling; he wants to fully understand it. These unusual feelings are even mystical for him; for example, when he feels that his mind is stretching. But this can only be noticed when he is practicing alone and is strongly focused on what is happening in him:

When I bend my cross leg forward, I feel the muscles and tendons on the back of my hips really stretching—almost painful stretching. But by staying in this position for a long time, I think that I can bow lower and lower, and move forward with my upper torso. This stretching is getting deeper and more demanding, and I feel it expanding my range of possibilities. As if the back and the muscles on the hips were longer. I can feel the length of these muscles, joints, and tendons.

But I also have a different feeling. It is not only the body that increases its capabilities; the mind also stretches. It becomes more stretched, more comprehensive, longer. It reaches somewhere where there is no physical space, but there is a mental space or some other space which I don't know much about (Self-observation, Stavros, Crete, September 7, 2020).

At the end of this section, I present the interpretation of my descriptions of individual practice by one of the co-researchers in the project, Aleksandra Płaczek.

In self-observations concerning individual practice, the issue of thinking about others and focusing on what is external disappears. On the other hand, there is a focus on the inner sensations of the body and mind, which is evident in the descriptions of feelings. They are detailed; the professor surprises himself and discovers new things in his body and thoughts. The descriptions are full of reflection, and reflectivity also becomes the motive for development... The professor feels every exercise within himself, and he selects each subsequent one for himself. He sets up a plan, a set of exercises in advance, and they differ from each other; he likes to repeat one sequence he knows. It turns out that the sequence was created in response to the needs of the body. The body thought before the mind. Sometimes it also happens during the conducted session, but there are limitations in other practitioners and their needs, and everyone has different ones. This makes one reflect that only the individual practice of an experienced yogi with knowledge allows him to meet these needs. The need to turn attention inward, to focus on one's “I” is also satisfied here...

Marcuse and Freud asked what real needs are. There is intense concentration during practice, a fusion of the body with the mind—a feeling of enormous stretching of muscles and tendons bordering on pain. Mind-body fusion, responding to sudden sensations, increasing the range of possibilities, self-awareness, and the feel of your own body and its components. Then, despite the reality surrounding us and numerous stimuli, we can separate the external from the internal and feel and respond to our own real needs. It is possible when yoga is advanced, and we don't need instruction. (Aleksandra Płaczek)

Aleksandra pointed to discovering what the body feels and needs during the yoga session. She used theoretical reflection to define and understand this phenomenon. Here, she tentatively used psychoanalytical concepts related to the division of needs into false and actual needs. False ones are socialized; real ones are hidden deep in a person's body and mind and do not come from society. Discovering these needs is possible during hatha yoga. This can be especially true during individual practice when we do not focus on others if we are instructors or co-participants if we practice with others. We then observe and recognize our bodies more precisely. It is "muscle awareness" that allows us to discover our needs. It is pretext knowledge, which we later verbalize or write down (Hastrup, 2018). This reflection complements observations and thoughts, which I have stated, and it is an essential note for my self-awareness as the instructor. By writing these notes, we get to know each other during and outside the yoga sessions. I learn a lot here: there are layered explanations, where one interpretation and description builds upon another to understand more (Rambo Ronai, 1992). I also learned how another person could read my report on my stream of consciousness. The person with whom I exercise gives me a feeling that understanding someone else is faster and more complete when there is a community of experiences. I can see it in Aleksandra's descriptions. The community of yoga practice is essential here, as is the community of those who write about and reflect on these experiences. The writing culture and the writing subculture are environments where certain conventions for describing experiences are produced, including the subcultures of contemplative research, autoethnographic research, and phenomenological research. In general, language is the basis of science and human studies (e.g., the categories and types of needs in Aleksandra's notes). These writing subcultures provide categorical foundations to describe the world, but also the ability to play with and operate on language to express what can be directly said and what has thus far not been possible to tell.¹⁰

"Me as a Participant"

Often in hatha yoga, *as a participant*, as in individual practice, Krzysztof has a more significant opportunity to focus on his bodily feelings and more time to think about what is happening to his body and what are the causes of certain states of his body:

There were a lot of asanas for stretching the backs of the legs. I noticed I had very tight hamstrings on my hips and immobile hip joints; I struggled to lean forward with my spine straight in a sitting position. Pain in the hips. Surprise at this pain. It occurred to me that it was from sitting at the computer for a long time yesterday (Self-observation, Krzysztof T. Konecki, Yoga in Park Źródlińska, August 15, 2020, 12.00-13.00.).

The hatha yoga in which **Krzysztof is a participant** usually comes down to **observing the work of the instructor**. He highlights those elements that can bring something new to his sessions and teaching and that he can **use in his approach and education of others**.

At the beginning, the instructor told participants to retract their eyeballs while standing in *tadasana*, to look inside rather than outside. Yoga was exercised—1.5 hours of exercise. Plank, sides planks, alternating between two sides—direct transition from the dog facing down to the Lounge pose and the warrior I pose, Triangle. I noticed that the instructor was talking about withdrawing his head

¹⁰ "Even the words freeze the contents." Any literary form imprisons lived experience; yet, without form or structure, it would be impossible to convey any experience." (Rambo Ronai, 1992, p. 123).

once we were in position. Ardha candrasana, I also noticed that the instructor was talking about withdrawing the head once I was in position (Self-observation, Krzysztof T. Konecki, as a participant, yoga on the grass, Park Źródlika, August 8, 2020, 12:00, Intense heat, 30 C).

Krzysztof also draws attention in self-observation to those elements that are different from his practice, that is, when his mind enters **the comparison mode**, and the participant's perspective is mixed with the instructor's perspective. It isn't easy to be just a participant. Although he tries not to judge these differences, as can be seen in the author's report below, **there is a hidden note of judgment in the background**:

After the yoga session, I felt powerfully energized. There was relatively no relaxation; I felt a surge of energy that was not used up and found no release or calming down. I also felt tired but full of energy, a lot of self-confidence, and even aggression. Instead, I have a different goal in yoga: relaxation, withdrawal, focus, concentration, and meditation (Self-observation, Krzysztof T. Konecki, as a participant, yoga on the grass, Park Źródlika, August 8, 2020, 12:00, Intense heat, 30 C).

For me as an instructor, it was interesting that the stretched triangle was done as in gymnastics. This is probably the first time I have seen something like this—quick entry and exit. Bam! Bam! Bam! Likewise, bends with arms raised, rapid change (Self-observation, Krzysztof T. Konecki as a participant, Yoga in Park Źródlika, August 9, 2020).

Sometimes the assessment comes directly from comparing his practice and his philosophy of hatha yoga. There is a perspective of assessment of which he is aware during the exercises:

The lady in charge did a very short savasana. We entered savasana from badha konasana. After doing this, we had to lie on our back with the soles of the feet still touching and then extend the legs to savasana. Savasana lasted only a minute. In my opinion, you shouldn't do that. You cannot accumulate the good currents and energy of the whole practice in such a short relaxation time (Self-observation, Krzysztof T. Konecki, Yoga in Park Źródlika, August 15, 2020, 12.00-13.00.).

I like to participate in the session when someone is conducting it. I don't have to overthink. I follow the instructions. However, the judgmental attitude and the instructor's attitude keep turning on for me. The instructor talked a lot, and he made a mistake in the name of the item once. It does not inspire confidence. Even though he was better stretched than me, I still think I do yoga better in a didactic sense, not only from him but also from many other instructors (apart from X and Prof. Sz.). However, I have noticed that the asana sequences selected by the instructor are similar to mine. Maybe he has the same motor and body sensation habitus. He did the bends as I did to rest after the positions of the warriors and the stretched triangle. However, I was surprised that he made the chair pose almost at the beginning of the session when we were not warmed up yet (Self-observation, Krzysztof T. Konecki, participant, Yoga in Park Źródlika, August 16, 2020, 10.00-11.00.).

Krzysztof's instructor perspective constantly appears, even the compulsion to compare his practice and teaching, looking for similarities and differences. Even if it takes place in a geographically and culturally distant site (Kathmandu, Nepal, where he also practiced), it should arouse respect and acceptance of the knowledge about hatha yoga. **The participant's perspective stops in the body because the body responds to instructions, while Krzysztof's instructor mind turns on the comparison mode:**

We found the school through an advertisement on a poster, in the street. It was close to where we were staying in Thamel, Kathmandu.

I felt a little excited—what the session would be like, almost at the source of yoga, under the Himalayas? The host trainer explained the meaning of her name, “ongoing love” or something like that. She announced the exercising of asanas in the convention of ashtanga yoga and pranayama (*kalaphati*) and meditation/relaxation. I immediately had the feeling that I was doing this too, three things—asanas, pranayama, and meditation. In Poland, it is rare to do these three things in one yoga session.

We started chanting the mantras. They were in Sanskrit; I had a hard time repeating them, but I sang them. It was a little embarrassing not to be able to repeat them. Then there was a Sun Salutation, done differently than what I do. There was four-point support instead of *chaturanga dandasana*, but with the chest on the floor, followed by a direct transition to *bhagujasana*. There was no pushing the pace.

After practicing asana, there was pranayama, *kalaphati*, rapid inhalations, and exhalations with the diaphragm. At one point, the teacher left. Which I noticed, and the judgment immediately arose that she should not be doing it.

We also did pranayama by plugging the nose (Nadi Sodhana). I do it a bit differently. There was no support of the right elbow with the left hand so that the right hand (for right-handers) would not get tired at the face. In a more simplified way, I suggest holding the left hand's fingers without hiding the middle and ring fingers. Open hand, the thumb blocks the hole in the right and the left ring finger. The teacher explained that this pranayama balances the left and right hemispheres of the brain; the right one is responsible for intuition and creativity, the left one for logic and planning. I also explain this in my classes; I had such a thought. I had a moment of wanting to use Sanskrit words for the two energies coming through the nostrils (Ida and Pingala) and wanted to say it out loud but decided not to. (Self-report, Krzysztof T. Konecki, Kathmandu, Nepal, “Samobodhi Yoga Home” School, March 11, 2020).

This perspective of assessment, and being aware of it, prompts Krzysztof to make an effort to remove it because yoga with a continuous assessment mode is not authentic yoga, which is an experience here and now. The comparisons refer to his past practice and the future; when Krzysztof thinks about how he will do hatha yoga and how he will not do it, he always does so regarding how hatha yoga is experienced and evaluated here and now. Ultimately, he

decided to suspend these assessments in the session described below, and he used it consciously and practically; **it was his *epoché***¹¹:

Then she asked us to lie down and to relax. She did not use the word savasana. She was talking all the time and relaxing. She talked a lot. The instruction at the beginning dealt with the tension of the muscles of the whole body, from the bottom of the body upwards. She listed different parts of the body. Then she asked us to let go of that tension. She was talking all the time, extending the syllable: reeeeelax. It made me laugh a little. I smiled and laughed inwardly. I felt pressure in her voice to make me relax. But after a while, the thought came, accept it, let go of your prejudices. I figured I needed an *epoché*. This is precisely the concept that came to mind. And I did it. And I only heard the sounds of her speech, not the content (Self-report, Krzysztof T. Konecki, Kathmandu, Nepal, “Samobodhi Yoga Home” School, March 11, 2020).

The comparison also applies to cultural issues if the practice takes place in a different cultural setting. After one of the hatha yoga sessions in Nepal, Krzysztof reflected that “the **main difference** between the Nepalese style in the Sambodhi school and in the Polish schools is that mantras are sung here, and music with mantras is played more often than in Poland. There seems to be a greater tolerance for religious, para-religious, and spiritual threads involved in yoga”¹²:

I was looking at her asana performance because I didn’t understand all the instructions, and the instructor’s accent disturbed my understanding. We started chanting the mantras and then did the Surya namaskara sequence. Each position in the “Sun Salutation” began with a mantra that the instructor spoke about first, and then we sang together. I had a problem with the mantras, with repeating the mantras...

At the end of the session, we got up and sang the mantra that closes the session and om and shanti, shanti (Self-report, Krzysztof T. Konecki, Nepal, March 13, 2020).

Krzysztof also perceives and compares the way he does yoga regarding **performance, self-presentation**, and unique facade (Goffman, 1956, pp. 53-54), which the performing instructor brings with him on stage and partially arranges. There is the outfit, and the body is a kind of physical capital (Rossing et al., 2014, p. 349), an exterior, and a manner that can be gentle or decisive. Doing hatha yoga can be seen in terms of a performance that has particular aesthetic values and evokes certain emotions in the audience (Singleton, 2010b, chapter “Demonstrations. Yoga as spectacle.”)

¹¹ The *epoché* of practice generally refers to the philosophical suspension of one’s assumptions, prejudices, and acquired knowledge about a given phenomenon or even the world. Of course, the *epoché* used here is a modification of a philosophical procedure to deal with a specific mental problem in a given situation. Of course, this is not a methodological procedure as understood in phenomenology, but an inspiration to be applied in everyday life (see Schütz, 1967).

¹² Here is my self-observation note when I was practicing in Poland: “We were working on the crown chakra. Responsible for spirituality. I haven’t talked much about spirituality because I don’t want to discourage people who are not motivated to achieve the spiritual elements of yoga from practicing yoga. I am careful here; I give this knowledge slowly and in moderation.” (February 11, 2020. Krzysztof T. Konecki) (See also Konecki, 2015; Mallinson & Singleton, 2017). In general, yoga is more secularized today, and its teaching is more adapted to the values of Western society (Singleton & Goldberg, 2014, pp. 1-3, 5).

Krzysztof conducts his hatha yoga in a relatively gentle manner, and his *decorations* are subdued and inconspicuous. Therefore, he drew attention to these differences and described them in the auto report below:

Today's yoga in the park was led by instructor X. He was undressed, only in underpants. He had tattoos on his right leg and left arm; the tattoos on the left arm extended the tattoos on the right leg. In the beginning, X very decisively (with a strong voice) gave orders regarding the mat placement. He said they should be pointing at him and arranged concentrically. He told me not to have a backpack in front of me because he must see me. I found that I was straightening the mat with my bag. And he said, "Take it off!" Me: "I took it off..."

Then he explained for a long time how to do *tadasana*. He talked a lot. And he paid attention to details and each exerciser. That was my impression. He noticed the feet not connected; then he shouted to this person: "put your feet together, blue T-shirt connect your feet!" "Bridge up!", Knee-patches up, "Cap up!" (in English)

We held our arms in the star position for a long time in preparation for the *uttitha trikonasana* position. Mr. X laughed when someone lowered his arms and said: "You are cold, so we warm up, triceps to the shoulder, we hold tight. It's getting warmer." And he smiled ...

The instructor also gave the command at the beginning to roll up two-thirds of the mat and sit on it straight, but with one leg lying fully on the mat and the other slightly raised. The practitioners expressed their surprise because the grass was wet and the mat was also wet: 'Don't be afraid, nothing will happen to you, you can just get your shorts wet. When one exerciser later wanted to wipe her daughter's (about ten years old) feet with a handkerchief, the instructor exclaimed: "What is this?! Nothing's going to happen; a little wet won't hurt.' The instructor was very vigilant; he saw everything and reacted immediately ...

Overall, I was satisfied with the session. It was intense for me because I had had a break. I was a bit tired but happy to meet such an original instructor (Self-observation, Krzysztof T. Konecki as a participant, yoga in Park Źródlika, August 29, 2020, 12.00-13.20).

After writing the author's report above, Krzysztof wrote a note summarizing his perception of how to conduct the instructor's practice. This perception is, of course, his interpretation of the practice by someone else. However, he was taking the role of an instructor all the time:

I had the impression that by shouting and giving orders, Mr. X. was playing a role, the role of a yoga sergeant. At first, I wouldn't say I liked it. I thought that the people from my group in the project would not accept such guidelines with this tone and directness. But over time, I accepted it, and it made me laugh.

I had the feeling that X had to control everything. His raised voice and shouts built the authority and probably also the power over the bodies of the other

exercisers. I was surrendering to that authority. There were, on his part, many games, but games with an attitude of dominance over the rest. The instructor was almost naked, clearly different from us. There was little time for contemplation; it was a time for permanent concentration, here and now, on physical exercise. I wonder how he conducts meditation.

In the perspective of Konecki's comparison, he is sometimes surprised by the way he performs the asana sequence, for example, with the pace of moving from one asana to the next: There was also Pradaritta Padottanasana, with a quick change to the side, to Parsvottanasana to one side, and back to Pradaritta Padottanasana, and then to the other side, to Parsvottanasana. It was done at a high pace. I've never done anything like this. I do not know why such a pace; after all, tendons and joints will not have time to stretch with such a rapid pace of position change (Self-observation, Krzysztof T. Konecki, Yoga in Park Źródlińska, August 15, 2020, 12.00-13.00.).

Krzysztof goes through a chain of thoughts in the process of comparing to get emotional energy for his practice (Collins, 2004, pp. 202-203). It is based on participating in ritual interaction chains, that is, the sequence of yoga sessions with different teachers. He tries to build the internal solidarity of his self to be a better yoga teacher.

I Come to the Relationship from the Point of View of the First Person.

The description below is about the relationship with the teacher, so I want to describe it as "I am talking."

Interesting observations appear after practicing with **my first instructor**, who I can also call **the yoga teacher** who shaped me and whose understanding of hatha yoga I have acquired, and who is still close to me.

I haven't seen my teacher for a long time, and I still respect him (code – respect for the teacher). X runs so-called "strong practice." Therefore, intense practice causes fatigue in the body. Here is my reaction when I went to a hatha yoga session in a park without knowing who I would meet there:

X is my teacher. He has always exercised very intensively. He did not pay much attention to the mental or physical condition of the practitioners. He demanded a lot from them. I always liked that, apart from those sessions when I couldn't handle it. I learned the most from X. I was making significant progress. He greeted me:

"I saw that you had had a long journey."

"Yes, I had a long trip to Nepal. I managed to leave at the last minute and return to Poland. The borders were closed soon afterward" (Self-report, Krzysztof T. Konecki, participant).

Although there were concerns about the teacher's grades, which he never expressed openly, I was pleased to meet him. Among other things, I like his sometimes playful and distant tone that he reveals during the exercising:

It was a bit cramped in the pavilion. We arranged the mats concentrically directed towards the instructor. However, we were very close to each other. The distance was about 20 cm. Michael and one practitioner said that the epidemic was over. It was all in the convention of a joke (Self-report, Krzysztof T. Konecki, participant).

In addition, I liked his unconventional methods; it was difficult to get bored with him. X did not need to talk as much as other instructors. He spoke as much as necessary; it allowed us to perceive the sensations of the body and our movements and to contemplate them:

Then we exercised as we wanted, we chose the position we wanted, the position our body wanted. That's how X led us. It was a lovely lived experience. Our body exercised us with minimal choice by the mind. At the end of this session, we sat down and went to meditation. There wasn't much talking. X told us to take a deeper breath to the top of our heads and exhale to our hips. We were supposed to watch what was happening with our exhalation and our body. We were not to get attached to the sensations of the body. We were supposed to accept what was happening and observe.

I liked it very much. Not a lot of talking, but a lot of observing yourself and your own body and mind (Self-report, Krzysztof T. Konecki, participant).

Third-Person Perspective

After the session, Krzysztof wrote down his feelings and reflections about his first teacher. He tried to understand why he liked yoga with X so much, even though it was difficult. He returned to the past and early socialization related to the habits of physical effort – accepting, breaking, and enduring it during fatigue:

I was delighted and even touched when I returned to practice with X. I'm thinking of going back to his school. This is an excellent teacher, and I can feel his practice. X jokes a lot, is at ease, has a perfect voice, inspires confidence, and has the authority to do so. His jokes are pretty mild and do not hurt my feelings. There are a few teachers like this. I appreciate them. Perhaps it matters that he was my first teacher, who taught me a lot. It is also essential that he exercises intensively, does not spare the body. Perhaps my habitus, taken from hard physical work in the countryside and in factories, where the body was heavily used and exploited, is also essential here. I don't regret my body; I often exercise when my body is frail and resisting. This is when the most remarkable advances are made. This is my conviction, and it is based on my past experiences. Without pain and hard work, there is no progress. To this, X also adds work to the mind. It's not that he only works with the body. Breath is also crucial for X. He is a pranayama instructor. He knows what breath is and how to use it. He is also experienced in meditation (Self-report, Krzysztof T. Konecki, participant).

My teacher, X, whom I admire, was criticized by one of my collaborators, Dagmara Tarasiuk, however. She expressed it in an emotional contemplative note. She also showed me my hidden assumptions about hatha yoga as a patriarchal system of teaching. The system has had implicit assumptions that the masters and teachers (usually men) should not be criticized,

and we should accept their behaviors and teachings because “this is the yoga.” She also connected it with the educational and academic system, where the patriarchy dominates, and which I am part of. I felt discomfort reading it, but ultimately, I had to agree with the opinions. I try to escape from the hierarchy and patriarchy, but the problem is that both sides of the interaction have difficulties running from the system. Another side of the issue is that when we lay the theoretical structure of the external theories or concepts onto yoga practice, we are trapped twice: by our cultural ideas and by our ideological ones, which evoke strong emotions (see Appendix 2). We internalize social life, and it becomes part of our thinking processes. Our individual subjective experiences are based on memories of past participation in interactional rituals; for example, the lectures in sociology that taught us that we are a social product or the yoga sessions that taught us that we should listen to our bodies and emotions. All of these situations become a part of the thinking process. The internalization of external voices means that they slowly become internal ones (Collins, 2004, pp. 186-89). The thinking process has the character of an internal conversation, with words and phrases and the images and schemes of the body’s moves. We remember the words and pictures of our yoga master’s performances from the past in the individual yoga practice.¹³ The thinking chains are consequences of the chains of the experienced interaction rituals.

At the end of the session description as a participant, I would like to present the reflection of another collaborator, Aleksandra Płaczek. She notices a problem with chanting the mantra in Sanskrit. This is a significant observation because it indicates linguistic issues and my reluctance to recite texts that have a religious or para-religious flavor. **Aleksandra also states that there is a comparison and evaluation of the hatha yoga sessions conducted by other instructors. This confirms my feelings and problems related to concentrating on the practice and the body when someone else is leading it.** Aleksandra ends her reflections with the statement that only self-practice can help one focus well on one’s feelings, and I partially agree. Sometimes, I get an insight into my feelings when someone else is practicing (e.g., my first teacher), but it is related to his authority and my trust in him as my master:

Contemplative Memo – “I” as a participant in a session conducted by another person”

In the role of a participant who obeys the instructions of another instructor, the tutor is repeatedly surprised by the form that the classes take, the exercises themselves, and their impact on his own body (unexpected pain, difficulty, tendon strain occur). In self-observation, there is an element evaluating and comparing how classes are conducted to the way one does it oneself. The assessment is often negative; the Professor assesses his practice better, and the instructions are more understandable and extensive. He prefers his ways. The Professor’s description focuses more on commands and observation of what is around, not on the feelings of the body or mind. So there is less self-reflection

¹³ My teacher wrote similar things on Facebook after the death of his teacher: “We both experienced Guruji’s departure very much. Then Sławek told me that when the Master leaves the body, all his knowledge and wisdom flows onto his disciples. The feelings that accompany me now are even stronger because Sławek was my first teacher. He is with me in every asana, in every yoga-related memory. I will continue the work that he started to the best of my strength and ability.” (https://facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=6487535197954805&id=100000951677392&ref=content_filter, retrieved on 14.11.21). We incorporate the gestures of our masters. They become part of our repertoire of movements in hatha yoga practice. We are the heirs of their traditions in a literal, embodied sense.

in it, only minor reconstruction of feelings. The way classes are conducted that the Professor prefers should be geared towards giving practitioners space, that is, fewer descriptions of the teacher, the possibility of focusing on oneself. It is an element that is consistent with the reports of one's practice and the role of the instructor when the Professor draws attention to his inability to focus on himself. According to the Professor, the ideal instructor should be colorful, aggressive, and firm. He values people who do not spare practitioners and who force them to make a lot of effort. The Professor claims that this is due to his habitus of a person taught hard physical work (in the village and factory).

In Nepal, the Professor was a practitioner with much less self-confidence. He felt resistance to speaking and to repeating mantras. Here, language and the linguistic barrier play a significant role. Asanas can be presented by showing them a physical outfit. Mantras are a component of speech and dialect, so good pronunciation and understanding are essential to understand and repeat them. The problem of pronouncing mantras is therefore insoluble, and one cannot use only eyesight, following the movements of the lips, and the sound of the voices pronouncing them.

His practice gave the Professor a feeling of fulfillment and fulfillment of the body's needs. When this practice is being conducted by someone else and another person chooses the asana set, the results may be contrary to expectations and desires. The Professor is looking for relaxation and withdrawal, and during one of the practices, he obtained a substantial inflow of energy. This prompts me to reflect again that only in our doing hatha yoga are we able to get what we expect and need. The body determines the needs that the mind locates and satisfies secondarily.

Conclusions

What do these various self-observations (from the participant, teacher/instructor, student) have in common? There is one integrating thread here, which is sometimes openly expressed, as in the descriptions of the online sessions: receiving instructions and controlling the course of sessions. **For the role of the instructor, the interactive context is essential**, as is the feedback, which is expected either through observing the body movements, facial expressions, and sounds made by practitioners, or after sessions in the statements and comments of practitioners. The teaching of hatha yoga is interactive. It can often be perceived as a performance where we seek confirmation for our message and are interested in how we came out in the eyes of others.

In practice, considered "individual," a person exercises and observes his body and mind. However, most practitioners are usually under the supervision of an instructor and follow his instructions. Moreover, even when there is no instructor or teacher, we hear (in our memory) his instructions, his voice, or remember what we learned when under his supervision.¹⁴ He is a

¹⁴ Krishnamacharya drew attention to a similar mental phenomenon of remembering what the teacher said or did: "He was known to declare, 'I don't say anything, I close my eyes and it is the guru in me who says all those things'" (Singleton & Fraser, 2014, p. 90). The interactional rituals, as yoga sessions, during the socialization in yoga practice, become part of the internal conversations in mind. Chains of thought are chains of symbols that were part of interaction rituals in the past. We think using pictures and physical moves, and sounds. Rituals appear in our minds. (Collins, 2004, pp. 183-185). The sociology of thinking, according to Collins, shows the connection of inner processes of thinking with the external world.

significant other, remembered in our body and body responses through his communicated body movements, sensations, and experiences (Rossing et al., 2014, p. 345). We hear his voice (I listen to it) even when practicing individually; I am his student at that moment. The embodiment of the instruction and knowledge is vital; that's how I remember it and feel it right now. This knowledge somehow enters the habitus of practitioners (Bourdieu, 1977). Therefore, the production of knowledge in the course of practice has its origins in primary socialization, in the transfer of knowledge that is going on at that time, and also in the chains of situations in which we participate in our life here in yoga sessions (Collins, 2004, pp. 183, 186).

During my apprenticeship with my first teacher, I noticed the importance of primary socialization in teaching how to use the body. Two aspects seem essential to me here. **The first is related to my teenagers' habits**, heavy physical work, body and endurance, and physical perseverance during hard work and strenuous physical exertion. **The second aspect is related to socialization in hatha yoga**, learning from the first teacher/instructor who has been accepted as a master – maybe not in the traditional sense as a guru, but as a teacher who provides instruction and knowledge about what yoga is. This primary socialization influences the further perception of yoga and how it is performed, and in the situation of being an instructor, how it is instructed/taught. The first experiences with various practices of using the body are crucial for developing its biography and treatment in life.

Another important theme of the self-reports above is taking the teacher/instructor's perspective into hatha yoga as a participant. Being in practice led by other instructors, I still compare it with my way of conducting sessions. This perspective of comparison appears automatically. It is accompanied by astonishment, an indication of the diversity of cultures and evaluation categories. The instructor's perspective is dominant in teaching and practicing, which seems natural. But even when it is possible to concentrate on your own body and mind, for example, during "savasana," the instructor's perspective comes on. This does not mean that the judgmental attitude is tiring or in itself that it interferes with our perception of our feelings. I perceive my feelings, and I am aware of them. Assessment is accepted, as this is the practice of the instructor. Similarly, the perspective of acceptance comes into play when I deal with a practice with my first and respected teacher, who is an authority on hatha yoga for me. All sessions with him were like chains of interactional rituals that built my emotional energy and motivation to do yoga (see Collins, 2004). Therefore, even when I am an instructor, I am a student of my teacher.

The body is an instrument of teaching through the display and discussion of body movements. How practitioners perceive this teaching is, in my opinion, the most crucial element of this type of practice, practice in teaching hatha yoga, and possibly other bodily exercises. It is the reception of the teacher's instruction, not necessarily his hatha yoga philosophy or his philosophy of life. This is how I can generalize these last two phrases in my practice and teaching. The rest is up to the practitioners themselves to evaluate and reflect on.

Finally, I would like to present a contemplative note of my research colleague who offered the following reflection after analyzing my self-reports. It is a view from the outside and from within our practice and from within the research process itself. It is another perspective that tries to understand what is happening here in this dynamic research project, in which analyses are intertwined with contemplative reporting (Bentz & Marlatt, 2021; Giorgino, 2015; Konecki, 2018, 2021) about data already analyzed as well as the analysis of new data. What happens in a research project where the research subjects are also the researchers themselves?

Strong relationship with the first teacher and a certain reluctance towards the other teachers. The practitioner puts his first teacher as the first important person, then himself and other teachers. He often emphasizes that he would have

approached his classes differently, that he would have changed something, that he would not like something in the style of the classes. High expectations of how others conduct classes – constantly comparing and evaluating. In the practitioner, the schedule of classes is firmly rooted, taken from the activities undertaken by the favorite, first teacher, and those undertaken by himself. Surprisingly, the class of the practitioner (K. Konecki) is very different from that of the guru. The guru's style, and thus the practitioner's favorite way of conducting classes, is intense and effortless. It doesn't spare the body, which is what the practitioner's body knows, having spent a large part of his life in the countryside and factories working physically. When assuming the role of a teacher, the practitioner's style is matched to the needs of the participants. It is characterized by gentleness, empathy, and respect for their bodies. During the classes, the practitioner does not suggest content that may discourage participants (such as aspects of spirituality in yoga), does not force their bodies, and perhaps due to the delicacy mentioned above or even conservatism, avoids touching the students' bodies. Although he does not like chatter during classes, the practitioner explains a lot and talks about the practice. He focuses a lot on students, not concentrating on his training during this time, which he emphasizes. He controls the situation and all participants. That is why he feels so uncomfortable during the online sessions; when deprived of this control, he cannot observe all the participants accurately. The teacher does not see their entire body shapes and body configurations during the position. The limitations of online classes—spatial, technical, and visual—depress the tutor and distract him (Dagmara Tarasiuk).

I learned from my colleague, who is also my student. The observations that confirm my conclusions and those that I am not fully aware of are valuable for me. For example, I differ significantly in my teaching from a teacher whom I admire and appreciate, emphasizing a more contemplative attitude rather than just a physical one. The second observation is the contradiction in my reluctance to “overtalk the practice” and the actual and frequent verbal explanation of many things in yoga. This reflection of hers and mine, in turn, allows me to become more aware of and see from the outside what I write about my practice and teaching. Generally, many of Dagmara's comments are consistent with my observations and self-analysis. A lack of incoherence could be due to two things:

1. Common and collaborative knowledge production. Together with the research team (two co-workers, Dagmara and Aleksandra), but also with the participants of the project practicing with us, we learn together and from each other. This is a co-production of knowledge that lasts over time (Bentz & Marlatt, 2021; Davidson et al., 2021; Rehorick & Bentz, 2008; Rehorick & Taylor, 1995). The conclusions of the analysis also come from conversations, exchanging correspondence, agreeing on meanings, expressing emotions and disagreements, being online together, and most of all, joint practice (see Appendix 1). The common perspective appeared unnoticed, and the initial incoherencies and doubts were forgotten. **The transfer of knowledge becomes the coproduction of knowledge.**
2. It may also result from using **an adopted sociological perspective** (contemplative social research, Bentz & Georgino, 2016; Konecki, 2018; Rehorick & Bentz, 2017) and the collaborative research and analytical techniques that generate a specific type of knowledge. Descriptions are derived

from observation and self-observation of body sensations, reports on emotions and thoughts that arise during the yoga sessions. By using a similar perspective, language, and shared experiences, you can come to common and similar conclusions.

3.

The joint production of knowledge in the first-person narrative perspective is emphasized in collaborative autoethnographic research (Ellis & Rawicki, 2013; Ellis et al., 2018) or in a study in which we deal with the attitude of “learning together” (“Leregogic”, Bentz & Marlatt, 2021, p. 10; Rehoric & Bentz, 2017, pp. 8, 26-27, 33; Rehorick & Taylor, 1995). In this type of pedagogical or research situation, research participants learn from each other. A hierarchy based on previous academic or expert degrees is suspended in favor of open discussion and joint conclusion. However, overcoming the hierarchy may encounter difficulties with both sides of the interaction (the professor-student relationship in our study). Tradition and habits play a role in preserving the hierarchical process of knowledge transfer. However, the collective learning approach is dominated by the joint construction of knowledge. It occurs thanks to a deeper understanding of relations, emotions, and everyday situations and overcoming the incoherence of learning through discussions. Authenticity and openness to the direct experience of the world by another become values and, at the same time, the basic assumptions for the production of knowledge. Astonishment/surprise is not rejected but is accepted and processed reflectively. It is a value, not only cognitively fertile but also one that gives joy to discovering new layers of social connection and awareness of social relations. They most often have the nature of “we relations” (Schütz, 1962; Schütz & Luckmann, 1973, p. 85), which take place in the entire presence of interaction partners here and now, where there is a mental and bodily coexistence. A unique and direct here-and-now exchange of knowledge occurs, and ultimately, the merging and compilation of the research participants’ knowledge and their inclusion in the mutual learning process.

I dealt with such a situation in the self-examination that I described above. I would not have seen myself without my colleagues and research participants’ presence, reaction, reflection, and self-examination. “Who am I in yoga practice” depends on the situation and interactions in the past, here and now, and how my mind works at the moment. I am never sure who I will become in a few minutes. My horizon of self is all the time open.

Appendix 1

Contemplative note – After reading the professor’s text on self-analysis by Aleksandra Placzek

Reading the text brought new inspiration and focused your thoughts on your chapters or papers. I notice threads that I have already touched upon, or I can mention them in my texts. This way of exchanging views and exchanging the content we have created complements each other’s knowledge and ideas. Still, it is pretty risky at times – I fear that the chapters I have written may not be revealing, and I will unconsciously recreate what I read in texts, papers, chapters, and notes from other researchers.

The professor writes about himself in the third person. Dagmara and I read this content as other third parties – this gives me the feeling that I am reading the text from the perspective of “growing something, layer by layer” and with the feeling that at least nine people are working on the text: we participants (3), we researchers (3), and we personalities (3). One by one, the project participants’ knowledge, experiences, and roles grow into the text being read at a given moment. Everyone has the perspective of their own emotions and feelings, as individuals (non) researchers, and as private individuals. The smooth interpenetration of roles

overlaps throughout the text and the empirical materials, like layers of earth or a cake, making me feel chaotic and uneasy. I look at the text with the feeling of having a dissociative identity disorder. On the other hand, this is what it should be like during the research process. This causes anxiety to arise, but it is immediately suppressed by the sense of rightness. When writing notes and analyzing the materials, I ask myself who I am now, what role, or rather, what glasses do I put on or should wear at a given moment? A practitioner's glasses? A sociologist's? A psychologist's? Should I take these glasses off for a while and take the perspective of someone entirely outside? Despite being grateful for the experience gathered during the project, I would like to undo the product, gain new knowledge, and sit in front of the empirical materials as someone new, without accumulated memory. To be like a blank page.

Even so, I now have a feeling that I can deepen my analysis, look further. The collected remarks and the repeated reading of the materials allow us to notice what may have been unattainable before. The boundaries of the mind expand. This is good for the results of the work, but it hampers the research process itself. There are many questions, thoughts, and clutter that I try to clean up and sort.

Here is my reaction to the contemplative note expressed in an e-mail to Aleksandra Placzek:

Good morning,

An excellent contemplative note.

The fear of repetition and not being innovative is always with us. This is normal in the research process.

The interpenetration of roles always occurs in the research process. We reveal it. The remark about nine people is excellent!!! So, there is a lot of us in this project, and only three people are paid. :)

Project experience is another cognitive filter. It must be remembered and suspended (epoché). But the willingness to be like a blank slate proves the awareness of the determinants of perception.

In my text, adopting the perspective of different people concerns the act of writing itself. In the process of writing, we discover new things and perspectives of our practice, and we even generate categories. In explication, as an analyst, I am always a third person. In writing, we can also express ourselves from the point of view of the first person. We probably have the problem of intersubjectivity when we analyze our auto-reports, but thanks to your notes, I can see it again from the outside. "Dissociative identity disorder" is an intended strategy here. I think there is more order in this disorder than in the "collective tinkering" of Szwabowski and his group (see Kaczmarek, Madys, Pławski, Szczepaniak, Szwabowski, and Wężniewska, 2020). But I don't know if this is better or worse for a text meant to break up the precise structure of traditional sociological texts. Generating knowledge may come precisely from the dissociative approach to writing what we are going through. For example, you are experiencing disorder and chaos, which could best be expressed with a poem or a jagged analytical text. Let's do it!

Besides, the inspiration for Illeism, writing about yourself from the point of view of a third person, also comes from jñāna yoga. 😊 We are also here at home. In addition, we also get a therapeutic effect.

There is another problem, the authority of the teacher or also the power. In English, authority is also power. His (male) influence on thinking can also be a problem in terms of subordinating to his thoughts, the way of thinking, and opposition to what he represents.

I learned a lot from your notes! Thank you! 🙏🙏🙏🙏

Regards,

Krzysztof T. Konecki 😊

Appendix 2

Contemplative note by Dagmara Tarasiuk

This is a contemplative note after reading a newspaper interview with Paulina Młynarska, in which I write on the topic of hierarchy, usually male style yoga, and the abuses related to it were discussed.

The interviewee is against forced corrections, pressure, or touch during practice. She sees universal consent to this touch in the automatic permission from others to manage her own body, which is characteristic of women, who are socialized from childhood to occupy a lower position in the hierarchy.

In one of my project interviews, the interviewee complained about the classes with X, who pressed the students without asking for permission to touch them. During one of the practices, he injured the interlocutor by pushing her to the ground. It took many years for her to recover from the injury, but she never went to the instructor about it. She never demanded compensation, which now seems to me to clearly show the patriarchal, that is, hierarchical system in the student-teacher relationship.

What is extraordinary is that our leader and, at the same time, the grant manager [KTK], when discussing this case, did not seem to sympathize with the interviewee who directly wrote that she was hurt. The professor often emphasizes that X conducts intensive practice, which the professor is particularly pleased with. A smile often accompanies storytelling about it. The professor also often emphasizes how important the teacher was in the process of educating him. After reading the interview and writing a chapter on hierarchy, I started thinking more about this case.

I wonder if the professor's reaction stems from a) sympathy for his teacher, b) a solid master-student relationship, which does not allow the professor to look at his master critically, c) the subconscious pattern that Młynarska talks about – a patriarchal attitude that does not allow the grievances of a participant in his master's classes to be taken seriously.

I experienced this fragment of the interview very much. I remember that I felt enormous anger towards Mr. X, the more so because the same story was repeated in another interview with another of his students! M., a participant in our project, was also damaged by Mr. X's aggressive working methods. That is why I did not want to interview this teacher, and while reading the interview conducted by Alesandra I felt disgust and aversion, even though the content was not repellent; indeed, at some point, Mr. X even apologized to his students, whom he might have hurt in the past. Interestingly, it seems to me that I did not articulate my anger towards this teacher on an ongoing basis precisely because my male teacher is his student and admires him. I did not want to undermine his master's authority. So, I remained subordinated to the power of my professor, not voicing my doubts.

I think this case shows the strength of a hierarchical structure based on a power relationship, both in the case of yoga practice and academic classes.

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My reply to Dagmara note (sent simultaneously to Aleksandra Placzek):

Interesting note. Very emotional. I understand. And I also understand this tension.

Remember that you have “real/authentic” contact only with me (a bit of conceit is also useful 😊). Other teachers are beyond your reach of reliable and open communication. They isolate themselves, distance themselves, only create the appearance of direct contact because such contact is emotionally and communicatively demanding. You can tell me many things; which other teachers can you do this with at our university?

I suspected that [a feminist article on the patriarchal structure in the yoga world] would spark some threads for reflection on the practice. And it happened. I sent it on purpose. So am I entering the patriarchal structure again because I wanted to achieve a specific effect? I am trying to create conditions of equality. If I leave the role of teacher, who am I in our relationship?

Did you come out of the patriarchal rhetorics? If so, who are you at present? What identities can be attributed to us? “Leregogy” can be helpful (Bentz & Marlatt, 2021, p. 10; Rehoric & Bentz, 2017, pp. 8, 26-27, 33; Rehorick & Taylor 1995). These notes help us to learn from each other and go beyond the patriarchal structure.

Again, the note is precious... because it is sincere and evocative.

Regards,
Krzysztof T. Konecki

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