

Inklusives Yoga – Wie können Yoga-Angebote zugänglicher und attraktiver für diverse Übende gestaltet werden?

Inclusive Yoga - How to enhance yoga classes in order to render them more accessible and attractive to diverse students?

Bachelorarbeit an der Fakultät für angewandte Sozialwissenschaften
der Hochschule München
Studiengang: BASA-online
SoSe 2023

Name: Nora Schmitt

Fachsemester: 8

Matrikelnummer: 05571719

E-Mail: nschmitt@hm.edu

Erstgutachterin: Prof. Dr. Patricia Arnold

Zweitgutachter: Prof. Dr. Heribert Limm

München, 14.05.2023

Abstract

Objective

Yoga practice has been associated with mental and physical health benefits. However, yoga settings seem to be dominated by white, able-bodied people. Within yoga research, accessibility and participation regarding groups have not been studied in depth. The present literature review aims to explore publications which investigate factors rendering yoga classes accessible and attractive to People of Colour and People with Disabilities. In addition, this review examines if there are singular and/or overlapping characteristics constituting incentives and deterrents regarding yoga practice, as well as whether Social Work is an area which can benefit from incorporating findings into lifeworld-oriented interventions.

Methods

The review has been informed by an intersectional approach based on critical race theory. Scholastic resources such as OPAC, Google Scholar, PubMed and Researchgate have been employed to obtain relevant publications in German and English. Subsequently the PQRS-method has been applied to analyse relevant publications and generate results.

Results

According to the quantitative and qualitative investigations reviewed, there seem to be several deterrents for People of Colour and People with Disabilities to adopt a yoga practice. Teachers' approach and expertise may minimise those; however, the set-up of the class itself plays a crucial role and needs to be adapted as per the students' needs. Furthermore, designing diverse marketing strategies will likely attract diverse audiences. Nevertheless, current advertisement and publication schemes lack concerning representation of People of Colour and People with Disabilities. Yet, due to the small body of research that this review found, the results and conclusions are not generalisable as further research seems imperative.

Conclusion

Yoga practice may be negatively associated with People of Colour and People with Disabilities. Whilst it was possible to determine several actions which should render yoga classes more attractive and accessible for the groups in question, further investigation of the issue seems necessary to verify determinants and design guidelines on how to assess and create sustainable, inclusive yoga spaces.

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1. Introduction

This literature review will focus on the accessibility of yoga classes for People of Colour (PoC) and People with Disabilities (PwD). While there are still limitations to existing investigations around the benefits of yoga, numerous studies indicate a positive effect on mental and physical well-being. Birdee et al, for example, examined the health-related quality of life of yoga practitioners and concluded that “regular use of meditation in yoga practice may have a positive effect on mental [health-related quality of life], whereas practising at a yoga school/studio may have a positive effect on physical [health-related quality of life]” (Birdee et al, 2017, p. 6). Several research teams even confirmed benefits for people suffering from major depression (e.g., Streeter et al, 2010 & 2020 / Shroff & Asarpour, 2017 / Sharma et al, 2016 / Scott et al, 2019). Having experienced benefits from practising yoga myself, the question arose, why not more vulnerable people adopt a holistic bodywork practice to either improve their health or as preventive care. Both seem relevant regarding Social Work since yoga-interventions may be considered an up- as well as downstream intervention (Fish & Moffat, n.d.), i.e., support conditions preventing physical and mental issues and having the potential to alleviate existing problems, respectively. Furthermore, advocacy has been a critical component in Social Work; Thiersch’s concept of Lifeworld Orientation and Staub-Bernasconi’s developments regarding Systemic Social Work establish the necessity of a dual strategy comprising individual casework in conjunction with social reform measurements (Steiber, 2014, n.p.); which led to the query if Social Work settings have the potential to enhance participation of diverse individuals in a health-promoting setting by designing this setting to be accessible and inclusive.

Rather than researching around minorities in general, an intersectional approach has been employed, focussing on specific groups. The choice for this grouping is primarily based on the conclusion that PoC as PwD experience limited participation in different areas of life, are prone to subpar socioeconomic living conditions, and would therefore benefit from mindful bodywork. Secondly, it seems in line with Social Work principles to elaborate on sustainable ways how enhance inclusion of vulnerable people to prevent

and tackle isolation and prejudice. A literature review employing search terms including yoga, inclusion, PoC, disability, etc., has been conducted using scholastic sources such as OPAC, Researchgate, PubMed and Google Scholar. Subsequently the PQRS-method (preview, question, read, summarize) has been applied to generate results, since the system facilitated focus and consistency, as well as identification and retrieval of relevant material (Cronin et al, 2008, p. 41). Publications have been included if they provided scientific insights and/or expert views. Unfortunately, the existing body of research explicitly aimed at inclusion regarding yoga classes is small; regarding enhancing yoga classes for PoC, five publications were found, whereas two had to be excluded since they did not contain primary information regarding inclusion (Lafleur & Baudendistel, 2013 & Putcha, 2010). Regarding rendering yoga spaces more inclusive for PwD, the search yielded five publications; two were excluded since results focussed solely on teachers' perspectives in a school setting (Wong, 2016) or employed a deficit-oriented approach examining a particular physical issue (Rai, 2021). The remaining six publications will be discussed in the PoC and PoD sections of this paper. As the correlations between sport and Social Work are still being researched and can be considered a growing field, it is not surprising that there is even less research, especially quantitative studies, exploring yoga class setups and inclusion factors. Therefore, I will examine the six publications, which are as trenchant as possible regarding the research question, and focus on authors of colour or with a disability. The latter seems crucial since Critical Race Theory points towards the need for "listening, challenging racism, and developing generous encounters in our research [to] enable a viable praxis for white researchers" (Swan, 2017, p. 569) and facilitators. Further details on the examined research setups or expertise, as well as methodological aspects considered in the literature reviews are elaborated in the introductory chapters regarding PoC and PwD, as well as in chapter four.

This paper will first establish how yoga is understood for the purpose of this literature review and why the inclusion of diverse people is relevant in Social Work. Subsequently, I seek to clarify terms and concepts underlying and guiding the research approach. Prior to the literature review regarding inclusion factors concerning yoga settings for PoC and PwD, I will give an

insight into socioeconomic situations of both groups. Thereafter, the results will be summarised and discussed, concluding with the need for expertise in teachers and further research to examine additional intersectional groups and their divergent needs.

2. What is yoga

In order to discuss the research question, it seems vital to establish how yoga is understood in the current context. Therefore, the following will provide some historical insights, followed by an approximation of holistic bodywork in general and a view into therapeutic yoga approaches, to close the chapter with a brief assessment of the current yoga landscape.

Yoga and its about 5,000 years old tradition has been spreading throughout the globe since the late 19th and 20th century in the US and Europe, respectively (e.g., Huges, 2019), with numerous teachers interpreting and augmenting original approaches. Hence, it is challenging to define what yoga is. Some authors, therefore, omit a definition and/or outline the style they prescribe (e.g., Dahlmann & Soder, 2013, p. 165 ff. / Stephens, 2017, p. 3 ff.), while others give historical or philosophical insights leaving it to the readers to find their own definition of yoga within (Mehta, 2017, p. 164 ff.).

For the purpose of this paper, a summary of Deutzmann's (2002, p. 44-92) comprehensive explanation seems apt:

Deeply rooted in Indian tradition, the first evidence of yoga is found in Vedas (the religious Vedic and Hindu scripture) and Upanishads (Hindu sacred treatises explaining Vedas in mainly mystical and monistic terms). These are expanded in Bhagavad-Gita and Patañjali-yoga-sutras (theoretical and practical aphorisms regarding yoga practice), integrating and arranging the Vedas and Upanishads preformed body of thoughts. Patanjali's eight-limbed path, based on Samkhya-philosophy, is considered the foundation of all contemporary yoga systems. Liberating oneself from suffering and, during these processes enhancing self-knowledge and -awareness can be seen as common denominators of traditional yoga approaches. *Self* describes the unchangeable essence of humans. Karma is considered another pivotal concept in yogic traditions; psychological and physiological education aims at

reducing tensions, therewith actions which cause suffering and repercussions. Methods how to achieve this depend on the yogic school; however, most presuppose self-mastery, i.e., spiritual and physical development through practice. Yoga as a spiritual system is typically based on reciprocal reliance and interaction of body and psyche. Those shall be optimally trained to achieve higher knowledge. Most variations of yoga practised are based on Hatha-yoga exercises; Hatha incorporates the foundations of yogic systems, even though it is considered more lifeward. In more practical terms, the body is seen as the vessel of the soul and the place of spiritual development. Hence the body assumes a positive significance. More modern and secular yoga interpretations strive for harmonious integration of psychophysical, social and spiritual planes of being. Yoga comprises a loving and mindful attitude towards the social world based on the notion of the unity of all beings and the integrated and fluid nature of all aspects of creation. Practitioners seek a stable state of bliss and satisfaction within changing outer circumstances and inner hardships. (Deutzmann, 2002, p. 92 f.)

There is scientific evidence that combining asanas (yoga postures), breathing exercises, and meditation has multiple benefits for body and mind (e.g., Dalmann & Soder 2013, p. 118 ff. / Stevens 2017, p. 51 ff.). Such benefits will likely be similar to those of other practices combining body- with breath- and meditative work, such as Qigong und Tai-Chi (Jahnke et a, 2010); this paper is not meant as an ode to yoga but rather targeted at making a working system available to a broader audience. It seems important to point out that any similar system will likely benefit from similar actions and that the author harbours no dogmatic approach towards yoga as universal remedy, but the discipline I can provide the most expertise to evaluate the relevance of results, etc. Furthermore, it seems advantageous that yoga is (theoretically) more widely accessible compared to other disciplines – not only can we practice yoga without any props, if necessary, therapeutic branches are rendering especially asanas doable for different types of bodies and needs. Therapeutic yoga may be described as a personalised type of yoga, Dalmann & Soder (2017), e. g. go to great length explaining how a yoga program designed for an individual and followed by the individual as home practice is vital to target specific ailments and also harness the full potential of yoga, especially regarding self-

efficacy (ib. p. 118 ff.). Since this research, however, focuses on class settings, which seem more relevant in Social Work for reasons elaborated in the course of this paper, the benefits of individual practice regimes will not be discussed in depth.

While some experts find it hard to appreciate what yoga has become, and critique proceedings of certain so-called spiritual leaders may be more than justified (e.g., Graham 2022, p. 36 ff.), it seems interesting to embrace that with the extension and diversification of the yoga landscape it may become more feasible for people to try a yoga style which suits their needs. In fact, it should be an asset regarding employing yoga in Social Work. For example, a rigorous, steadfast Iyengar school tends to be less attractive to youths than a more playful variant such as, e.g., Acroyoga.

3. Relevance of yoga in Social Work

The fact that several universities worldwide offer courses around Sport Social Work may be regarded as evidence of the potential of marrying sports activities and pedagogic interventions. Moreover, research as of Lawson (2005) found i. a. that partaking in sports programs improves well-being, decreases adverse effects of poverty and aids human capital development. However, one needs to distinguish between Social Work for athletes and Sport Social Work for laypeople (Dean & Rowan 2014, p. 3 ff.); for the current context, the latter will be relevant.

Unfortunately, Newman et al found in a “study [which] sought to explore the lived experiences of social work professionals who work within different sport systems and settings” (2022, p. 38) that currently, a “lack of research and literature related to the intersection of social work and sport” (ib. p. 48) prevails. Moreover, available data tends to be outdated, and has mainly been obtained from studying Caucasian people (ib. p. 48).

Despite the lack of comprehensive studies, it seems safe to claim that Social Work as a field has been expanding, and holistic approaches such as mindfulness, qigong, yoga, etc., have found recognition in therapeutic settings (Deutzmann, 2002, p. 17 f.). Especially regarding health promotion and prevention of ailments, Social Work should benefit from yogic influence (ib.

p. 42). Not least because there are several shared characteristics – Social Work as well as yoga observes the individual as part of physical, emotional, social and environmental settings and seeks to enhance inclusion, personal fulfilment and agency by minimising inner strife between body and soul, thinking and doing, social isolation or integration (Staub-Bernasconi, 1994, p. 296 f. / Stephens, 2017, p. 61 ff.). Deutzmann adds that yoga and Social Work both strive to overcome and decrease suffering taking into consideration how body, soul and environment interact (2002, p. 228). Furthermore, a shared conception of the human being can be described as trusting in the resources and potential of the individual while treating each other with respect and kindness (Dalmann & Soder, 2013, p. 6 f.). Hence, yoga as Social Work is resource- and person-oriented, improving sustainable coping mechanisms, furthering self-confidence and an optimistic and self-affirmative attitude to life. Both strive to change unpleasant social structures and develop the highest possible autonomy regarding our social environment (comp. Deutzmann 2002, p. 228). Self-efficacy is crucial in Social Work and yoga, clients are to be actively involved in their journey to healing and/or improving their circumstances, and they acquire tools which support them during their recovery (comp. Dalmann & Soder 2013, p. 9). Thiersch's Lifeworld Orientation approach, suggesting that Social Workers "should immerse in the complex realities of people's lives, concerns and networks" (Schugurensky, 2014, n.p.) depicts how to intervene sustainably. Moreover, modern Social Work theories and yoga concepts exhibit a significant degree of congruence regarding health, especially concerning strategic health promotion (Deutzmann 2002, p. 230).

Another already mentioned congruence, namely resource orientation, seems worth discussing in more detail. Deficit-oriented approaches (also referred to as pathogenesis or problem-oriented procedures) in Social Work are considered outdated (Paulick, 2019, n.p.). Whereas focussing on bringing to light, enhancing, utilising and securing clients' resources furthers sustainable coping behaviour based on individual fortes, sources of strength and potentials – yoga methodologies seek a similar path (e.g., Stephens, 2017, p. 51 ff. / Deutzmann, 2002, p. 15 ff. / Dalmann & Soder, 2013, p. 98 ff. / Paulick, 2019, n.p.). This is also in line with the Lifeworld Orientation approach as per

Thiersch, which stresses the necessity to design Social Work interventions based on the problems and needs of addressees and incorporate their interpretations (Schugurensky, 2014, n.p.), while critically observing neoliberal tendencies and understanding the political scope of Social Work (Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009). Or, as Thiersch elaborates: Social Work proceeds from the socio-ethical vision that citizens in difficult situations have the right to live a life in freedom, without fear, restrictions, and oppression. In addition, they are entitled to support and aid. Lifeworld-oriented Social Work puts this social-equity approach in concrete terms by seeking to realise justice and freer living conditions regarding everyday living environments. (Thiersch, 2016, p. 22). Hence, in order to further inclusion, it is vital to obtain in-depth perspectives of the groups and/or individuals for (or ideally with) whom Social Workers collaborate.

4. Discussion of terminology and concepts

The following paragraphs will discuss and define crucial terminology and concepts employed in this work. In addition, this section serves to clarify terms used in various contexts with different scopes and interpretations.

4.1 Inclusion

It is a term that has become more frequently used in the last ten years in different contexts and, therefore, vital to clarify how it has been used in the present paper. Derived from Latin, the term has been used in pedagogical contexts to refer to including people of diverse backgrounds as well as appreciate diversity. Inclusive education comprises the fundamental premise that education is a universal right (Köpfer, n.d. / n.p.). Since this research is about inclusion in an educational context, it seems fitting to include such perspectives; Guijarro defined Inclusive Education as follows within the framework of UNESCO's Inclusive Education Agenda:

“a process intended to respond to students' diversity by increasing their participation and reducing exclusion within and from education. It is related to the attendance, participation and achievement of all students, especially those who, due to different reasons, are excluded or at risk of being marginalised.” (Guijarro, 2009, p. 13)

Booth, co-publisher of Index for Inclusion, “a resource to support the inclusive development of schools” (Booth & Ainscow, 2002, p. 1), emphasizes the processuality and envisions inclusion as a means to revoke barriers limiting participation:

“Inclusion in education is concerned with increasing participation in, and reducing exclusion from, the learning opportunities, cultures and communities of the mainstream. Inclusion is a never-ending process, working towards an ideal when all exclusionary pressures within education and society are removed.” (Booth, 2003, p. 2)

The roots of the term inclusion, as per Hinz (2008, p. 34) stem from the North America of the 1970ies. Parent-teacher associations disagreed with prevailing integration policies which assumed children need to prove their ability to integrate as opposed to the school’s ability to include children (Hinz, 2008, p. 34 / 2004, p. 356). The term became widely used in the US and Canada and was employed internationally further to UNESCO's Salamanca Declaration 1994 (even though the German translation kept using the term Integration) (Hinz, 2008, p. 36).

Nowadays, connotations and understanding of the term *inclusion* are varied; Bürli suggests establishing an international comparing description to broaden knowledge and ken as well as providing a point of departure for comparative, normative and cooperative activities (2009, p. 20 f.). While this is likely a complex process, there is a contentual consensus regarding *inclusion* not referring to attributes such as handicapped, impaired, etc., but educational approaches regarding the diversity of personality traits. Mittler assesses:

“Inclusion implies a radical reform of the school in terms of curriculum, assessment, pedagogy and grouping of pupils. It is based on a value system that welcomes and celebrates diversity arising from gender, nationality, race, language of origin, social background, level of educational achievement or disability.” (2000, p. 10)

Adapting Mittler’s definition to the current context, i.e., replacing *the school* with *society* and the scholastic with a yogic setting, it seems very fitting for

exploring how yoga settings can be rendered more welcoming for PoC and PwD celebrating their diversity.

4.2 Intersectionality

The definition of this term, whilst no less challenging, seems less ambiguous. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) outlines Intersectionality as follows:

“Analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination.” (EIGE, 2016)

Since *analytical tool* tells little about the scope of this tool, the explanation of the Center for Intersectional Justice seems more tangible and therefore fitting for this paper:

“The concept of intersectionality describes the ways in which systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class and other forms of discrimination ‘intersect’ to create unique dynamics and effects. [...] All forms of inequality are mutually reinforcing and must therefore be analysed and addressed simultaneously to prevent one form of inequality from reinforcing another. For example, tackling the gender pay gap alone – without including other dimensions such as race, socio-economic status and immigration status – will likely reinforce inequalities among women.” (CIJ, n.d.)

Works around intersectionality from hooks (e.g., 2014, [1984]) and along critical race theory from Crenshaw (1989, who coined the term intersectionality), explain how related systems of oppression, domination or discrimination depend upon and reinforce each other, which leads to systemic injustice and social inequality. Since policies and laws usually attempt to correct only one form of marginalised identity rather than interlocking multiple oppressed identities, intersectional identities may be overlooked or ignored (Davis, 2008, p. 20 ff.).

There are some aspects of intersectionality worthwhile to critique (fears of the political right-wing seem too unworldly to discuss in this context), notably that “Intersectionality is frequently misunderstood when bridging theory into quantitative methodology. Further work is required to (1) ensure researchers understand key features that define quantitative intersectionality analyses, (2) improve reporting practices for intersectional analyses, and (3) develop and adapt quantitative methods.” (Bauer et al, 2021, n.p.). The concept, however, still seems inalienable in the present context in order to visualise the complex issues around inclusion and yoga, since it is offering “the tantalizing possibility of exposing multiple positions and power inequalities as they appear in any social practice, institutional arrangement, or cultural representation.” (Davis, 2008, p. 21)

4.3 Critical Race Theory

In order to establish the framework of this paper, a brief overview of Critical Race Theory (CRT) seems crucial. The concept was developed in the 1970s by Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman who “sought to examine the ways in which race, racism, and power continued to flourish even in the years after the Civil Rights Movement” (Constance-Huggins, 2012, p. 6). Their research interest was initiated by torpid racial transformations in the US and the undoing of achievements in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement. Previous Critical Legal Studies (CLS) had investigated the in- and external inconsistencies of legal doctrines (ib., p. 7) as well as revealing that “legal ideology has helped to create, support, and legitimate America’s present class structure” (Crenshaw, 1988, p. 1350). Bell saw the importance of unveiling institutionalised racism, as he found that CLS lack ethnic and racial considerations and, therefore, questioned the significance concerning social transformation (Constance-Huggins, 2012, p. 7). CRT has since outgrown its initial legal dimensions to be applied in various disciplines (ib., p.7), amongst other Social Work (eg. Campbell, 2014 / Abrams & Moio, 2009).

CRT research argues racism is a structural part of society as “claims of objectivity and neutrality of the law ignore the structural inequalities in society”, therewith, normalising and perpetuating racism (ib., p. 7). Six tenets inform

CRT research and pedagogy and can, according to Constance-Huggins, be summarised, as follows:

1. Racism is endemic – PoC regularly experience racism as it “is reproduced in our structures, customs, and experiences” (ib., p. 7). Hence, race should be considered a central force which “defines and explains human experiences” (ib., p. 7) while remaining invisible to those with racial privileges.

2. Social construction – CRT establishes race as a social construct, acknowledging it as a systematic characterisation “based on observable physical attributes” (ib., p. 7) which do not correspond to genotypical realities. This perpetuates legal and empirical tendencies of dominant groups to protect their interests and shape lifeworlds of minorities.

3. Differential racialization – “dominant groups in society can manipulate and recreate racial groups in different ways at different times to determine who is “in” or “out” of the dominant group.” (ib., p. 7) Out-groups are typically infringed regarding resources and opportunities.

4. Convergence and materialist determinism – CRT assumes that the majority class benefits from racism on a mental and material level. The interests of the oppressed will, therefore, solely be represented if convergent with those of the dominant group. Hence, “social, political, and economic change on behalf of racial minorities” (ib., p. 8) would merely be considered if the dominant group profits from such change.

5. Voice of the marginalized – “racial minorities are routinely excluded from the historical accounts given by dominant groups.” (ib., p. 8) This is interpreted as justification and legitimisation of hierarchical power constructs. Consequently, CRT seeks to reflect the “voices of the oppressed [...] in any recount of history”. (ib., p. 8) Experiences of minorities must, therefore, be the basis of discourses around race and racism.

6. Intersectionality of identities – even though CRT primarily investigates the correlations between race and oppression, “the intersectionality of different forms of oppression” (ib., p. 8) is highlighted. Variables such as “religion, gender, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, resident status” (ib., p. 8) influence behavioural patterns and access to resources. Therefore, a

multidimensional approach is vital to avoid reiterating oppressive systems. (Constance-Huggins, 2012, p. 7 f.)

As origin and phenotype are significant regarding participation and access to resources, corresponding aspects need to inform Social Work initiatives. Narrowing the gaps caused by poverty and persistent racial disparity have been driving forces of figures defining Social Work, such as the Barnett's founding Toynbee Hall, or Jane Addams structuring Hull House. (Braches-Chyrek, 2013, p. 134 ff.)



III. 1

The issue of health disparities in minority groups, however, is still salient, as, for example, written evidence from a Toynbee Hall committee to the UK Parliament indicates: “In order to tackle effectively the long term health inequalities faced by certain [Black, Asian, and minority ethnic] communities and their disproportionate vulnerability to the effects of COVID-19, the government must publically recognise the cumulative effect of institutional, structural, interpersonal and internalised racism on the health of individuals and communities.” (Toynbee Hall, 2020, n.p.)

This leads to the conclusion that CRT and Social Work are not only compatible, but that including critical racial approaches in Social Work will be the only viable way forward regarding social change. Recognising the roles ethnicity has played regarding poverty, employment and education “provides an opportunity for students to be more effective as they pursue social change both with and on behalf of oppressed groups” (Constance-Huggins, 2012, p. 8). This indicates that CRT-analyses should be beneficial for Social Workers regarding advocacy, for clients to put individual experiences in political perspective and for learning settings, such as yoga classes, to raise issues around accessibility in conscious and inclusive way.

Adopting an approach informed by CRT in this paper has been important, since “both [CRT and Social Work] seek to promote social justice for those who are

oppressed because of their race” (ib., p. 9) and social justice can be considered a primary mission of social work (ib., p. 9 / Staub-Bernasconi, 2016). CRT also promotes social justice on an individual level by discussing settings which oppress clients: “approaches to interventions that merely assist marginalized persons, families, groups, or communities to acquiesce to a racist structure [are to be avoided]. Rather, CRT-oriented practice endeavors to change structures that are the source of the original problem” (Ortiz & Jani, 2010, p. 183). In line with the fifth CRT-tenet, advancing the voice of the marginalised, this literature review features publications authored by PoC and PwD whenever feasible.

4.4 People of Colour

The abbreviation PoC stands for People or Person of Colour; the Cambridge Dictionary gives a simple yet apt definition: “someone who does not consider themselves to be white” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.); however, since the term has a more layered history and meaning, this definition seems too shallow for the context of this paper.

Hence, the following summary of a detailed insight formulated by the Berlin group *Diversity Arts Culture* appears more fitting for this context: PoC may be defined as a person who has experienced racism. The term has its roots in the 1960ies US-American Civil Rights Movement when the derogative term *coloured* was replaced, People of Colour saw themselves as solidary allies who had experienced structural exclusion due to racism. The global north has adopted the term. It also constitutes a conscious dissociation from words such as *migrant*, the connotation being focussed on migration-experience rather than racism, since not all migrants experience racism and not everyone experiencing racism is statistically a migrant. The term PoC does not describe skin colour, rather it encompasses marginalisation due to racism. In Germany, people of the African, Asian or Latin-American diaspora, amongst others, can be considered PoC. Eurocentric, racializing views based on unaccounted/unresolved colonisation and hegemony need to be taken into consideration. Orientalism is another issue playing a role in reproducing stereotypes; people of Arabic decent, e.g., experience racism on the labour

and housing market, as well as in education and culture due to their attributed culture and/or religion. (Diversity Arts Culture, n.d.).

While this relatively comprehensive definition may be less convenient, it seems a more reasonable attempt to comprehend the complex nature of the connection between history and designations.

Lastly, it appears noteworthy that while the term Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour, in short BiPoC, has become more widely used in the last years (Vallie, 2022) and British authors tend to prefer the term Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME), I choose to employ the term PoC. This choice is based on a pragmatic approach regarding this literature research, since the term PoC has been employed more frequently and should, therefore, provide a more comprehensive picture regarding existing studies. The author is aware of issues around grouping people who do not identify as white; not recognising individual, unique experiences involves the danger of marginalising individuals' needs, as discussed in the section about intersectionality.

4.5 People with Disabilities

Very similar issues around grouping people apply in this context. The abbreviation PwD stands for People with Disabilities, a description chosen to accentuate that a disability is a mere attribute that does not define a person as such. In this context, it also seems crucial to understand what disability means. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines disability as follows:

“Disability is part of being human. Almost everyone will temporarily or permanently experience disability at some point in their life. An estimated 1.3 billion people – about 16% of the global population – currently experience significant disability. This number is increasing due in part to population ageing and an increase in the prevalence of noncommunicable diseases.

Disability results from the interaction between individuals with a health condition, such as cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and depression, with personal and environmental factors including negative attitudes, inaccessible transportation and public buildings, and limited social support.

A person's environment has a huge effect on the experience and extent of disability. Inaccessible environments create barriers that often hinder the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society on an equal basis with others. Progress on improving social participation can be made by addressing these barriers and facilitating persons with disabilities in their day to day lives." (WHO, n.d.)

This definition seems apt as it points out that disability may affect everyone's life at some stage and, therewith, stresses the importance of inclusion and participation. More specifically for this paper, PwD is understood as an umbrella term for people who experience exclusion as their bodies and/or minds function in ways the majority of society is not (yet) used to.

5. Literature review regarding yoga settings and People of Colour

In the following section, I will discuss the socioeconomic situation of PoC and subsequently highlight implications regarding the benefits of yoga in that context. Two publications dealing directly with queries around inclusion of PoC in yoga environments will then be examined, followed by data from a medical research team. As noted initially, it constitutes a conscience choice to elaborate on the initial two texts, which is based on the necessity to launch inclusion measures based on affected persons' views, or as Baires et al put it: "Within all contexts, we must be effective listeners and precisely mediate the much needed and specified reinforcement that BIPoC have been clearly stating for centuries." (Baires, 2022, p. 1047)

As noted in the introduction, there is little data available regarding yoga and participation of PoC to start with. Especially thorough qualitative research on beliefs regarding yoga practice is lacking, and studies focusing on vulnerable populations are yet more rare (Middleton et al., 2017, p. 83 f.). The texts examined below seemed to give the most valuable insight regarding the research question. Furthermore, it appears valuable to centre research around publications written by PoC in order to improve visibility and widen the audience of underrepresented groups as PoC, which still experience more complications regarding higher education in particular (e.g., Gwayi-Chore et al, 2021) and make the voices of PoC heard since academic publications

present more hurdles for PoC (e.g., Dewidar, 2022). Each review below is followed by a conclusion regarding effective inclusion measures for yoga practitioners, teachers and studios, which will later be presented in conjunction with the conclusions referring to PoC.

5.1 Socioeconomic situations of People of Colour

As established previously, PoC, as an umbrella term, describes a multitude of people. Hence, to make assumptions about their socioeconomic status (SES, i.e., income, educational attainment, financial security, subjective perceptions of social status and class as well as quality of life attributes, opportunities and privileges afforded to people within society [APA, 2012]) as a whole would be preposterous and feed into derogative postcolonial narratives. Since this paper aims to improve accessibility of yoga classes, particularly for underprivileged people, however, a convergence towards SES seems essential.

The American Psychological Association (APA) verifies that “the relationship between SES, race and ethnicity is intimately intertwined” (APA, 2017, n.p.) and plays a significant role in a person’s SES. Especially segregated communities frequently struggle with low income, poor health conditions and lower levels of education. Research has shown interactions between health disparities and SES (ib.). Shedding light on the intersections of SESs, it seems established that race and SES influence health singularly as well as accumulatively (Williams & Mohammed, 2013, n.p.). Evidence suggests that in the US, African Americans, Latinos and Hispanics, American and Alaska Natives, as well as Asians tend to be more endangered to experience multidimensional poverty, have lower incomes and high-cost mortgages compared to Caucasians. Regarding education, dropout rates are higher amongst people from minorities, which can be connected to higher unemployment rates. (APA, 2017, n.p.) Williams and Mohammed (2013, n.p.) also constitute that physical health may be impaired due to institutional discrimination regarding access to and quality of care. Various studies found a correlation between ethnicity and compromised physical health (APA 2017, n.p.). Similar results have been established regarding psychological health; depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as well as substance abuse, tend to be more prevalent amongst minorities (ib.).

Comparable issues have been observed in Europe despite stronger welfare tendencies; an initial study of the German national discrimination and racism monitor (Nationaler Diskriminierungs- und Rassismusmonitor) by the German centre for integration and migration research (Deutsches Zentrum für Integrations- und Migrationsforschung - DeZIM) establishes that about 26% of adults and 40% of children living in Germany have migration history (DeZIM, 2022, p.30). While not all of them experience racism, i.e., would classify themselves as PoC as per the given definition, there are also people without migration history suffering from discrimination. The above-mentioned study focuses on Black, Jewish, Muslim, Asian and Eastern European people as well as on Rom*nja and Sinti*ze and will, following US-American research, assess the situation in Germany regarding depression further to racial discrimination, disadvantaged interactions as discrimination at work, racism in media, etc. (DeZIM, 2022, p. 30). Bakhtiari et al's work around Minority Health Inequalities in Europe establishes, based on several previous studies, that "social policies and welfare state effort are beneficial to overall population health" (2018, p. 250); however, due to a lack of available research and data, there is insufficient evidence for the correlation of decreased health inequalities and welfare generosity (ib. p. 251). Their research shows that socioeconomic disadvantages affect self-reported ratings of minority groups' health (ib. p. 254). Based on this data and implications that yoga practice offers numerous health benefits (Birdee et al 2017), the following will elaborate on aspects that may deter PoC from trying yoga and what can be done to create incentives to adopt yoga.

5.2 Verification of inclusion factors and barriers for People of Colour regarding yoga

Further to establishing that PoC tend to be affected in multiple intersectional areas by physical and psychological stresses, it seems natural to ask why few attend yoga classes to improve their mental and physical well-being. Therefore, to determine factors that would render attending yoga classes more attractive to PoC, an in-depth review regarding inclusion factors in yoga settings of publications authored by PoC, as noted above, will be followed by a conclusion of said factors. The first publication is a book written to promote diversity and social justice within the yoga industry (Graham, 2013, p. XX)

authored by a Black yoga practitioner and teacher who investigated inclusion issues from multiple perspectives.

5.2.1 Yoga as Resistance, Graham

Graham holds a PhD in psychology and acquired her first yoga teaching certificate in 2014 (Graham, n.d.); in her book *Yoga as Resistance*, she examines the current situation in yoga classes and teacher trainings. A major aspect she criticises is how Western yoga's physical and physiological dominance is questionable. She quotes C. G. Jung to point out the rare potential of yoga, which is not synonymous with solely practicing asanas: "In the East, where these ideas and practices have developed, and where for several thousand years and unbroken tradition has created the necessary spiritual foundation, Yoga is, as I can readily believe, the perfect and appropriate method of fusing body and mind together so that they form a unity which is scarcely to be questioned. This unity creates a psychological disposition which makes possible intuitions that transcend consciousness." (as per Graham 2022, p. 33) This translates into the lack of body positivity in many yoga classes, i.e., for people who do not consider themselves athletic, the focus on asanas can be considered a deterrent to giving yoga a try. Furthermore, Graham observes students' tendencies to mimic their teachers (ib. p. 33 f.). Consequently, seeking to create an environment in which PoC feel safe and welcome, yoga teachers need to be aware of their role being a role of power. Especially teachers who do not share discriminatory experiences similar to their students' may need to educate themselves on power, critical race theory, etc. In addition, Graham invites everyone to think of one's own role regarding social justice, racial and intersectional equity (ib. p. 106).

As Crenshaw noted:" The better we understand how identities and power work together from one context to another, the less likely our movements for change are to fracture." (as per ib. p. S. 62) Graham points out that humility is required to keep respectful regarding students' stories, "what they are carrying in their bodies and minds." (ib. p. 42). "When students make you aware of discomfort or harm caused through your facilitation, then it is time to pause. Not defend but pause. To listen. To ask how to support the student, how to repair, or how

to make amends” (ib. p. 42). Being open to criticism entails separating selfish motives (e.g., being liked) from teaching. Moreover, it is vital for students’ psychological safety to provide a safe space to fail and, hence, for teachers to embody that as well. “Ensuring that your teaching practice does not merely tolerate or accommodate the most marginalized, rather it embraces and honours them – irrespective of their presence in the space – is fundamental to psychological safety.” (ib. p. 51).

For yoga studios, Graham suggests employing tools such as RIED (Reorganise, Identify, Evaluate, Develop), a model that furthers openness to enquiry, compassion and experimenting (ib. p. 62), provides insight regarding persisting structures and facilitates monitoring change. RIED employs cyclic evaluation that facilitates assessing emotions and approaches to addressing them (ib. p. 59). Such measures seem especially important when studios and/or teachers strive to harness diversity (defined as “the condition of having or being composed of differing elements, especially the inclusion of people of different races, cultures, etc. in a group or organisation.” as per Merriam-Webster [ib. p. 67]). It seems crucial to bear in mind that token hires, e.g., of teachers identifying as PoC, put stress on the individual, which not only results in high turnover rates (ib. p. 68) but seems intrinsically faulty when attempting to revise power structures and improve participation. A “team culture that celebrates and encourages different ways of working, that cultivates listening, that redefines power, thus shifting power dynamics, that reimagines and makes transparent performance recognition and reward, and that proactively addresses and makes space to negotiate conflict.” (ib. p. 67), on the other hand, has great potential to continuously attract and empower a diverse audience. As useful tool to support this process in early decision-making stages, Graham suggests DEI SWOT analyses (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats concerning Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) which should also be completed by co-workers. Results may be shown in a DEI matrix which points towards first steps regarding improvement (ib. p. 72).

As per Graham (ib. p. 70 f.), long-term changes need to be based on a) resources, i.e. dedicating a budget for inclusion and expert help, b) metrics as

in acquiring qualitative as well as quantitative data, c) commitment, especially senior management needs to understand and prioritise Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, d) training, e.g. antiracism training for the managerial level, e) processes, needs and measurable goals have to be defined, f) more training, also the staff leading processes needs training to embody inclusion goals, g) reflect, change and progress need to be measured, h) repeat, i.e. support continuous un-/learning.

To conclude the above, rather structural approaches, it seems necessary to point out, as Graham does (ib., p. 58), that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. The likelihood, however, of finding diverse views and approaches amongst a diverse community is high; “we have to move through the discomfort of uncertainty and accept that for most things in life, and especially in deconstructing systems of oppression, there is no black and white.” (ib.), and it is vital to decolonise our approach to critical thinking. The following examples give insight into successful applications of the above as well as of more tangible measures that successfully opened doors.

5.2.2 Testimonials regarding sustainable yoga settings for People of Colour

The two experience reports below show how variable and needs-oriented measures to invite PoC into a yoga space can be.

Aya-Nikole Cook, owner of Haji Healing Salon, strives to lower barriers for Black and Brown communities to “access life-enhancing healing modalities” (ib. p. 76). She describes in an interview how small changes can have big results. Opening a yoga studio in a predominantly non-white area with a lot of gun violence, she, on the one hand, built sandbags in a seating area at the windows to stop stray bullets; on the other hand, she noticed a surge in locals from the predominantly Black area entering the space after she changed the doorbell and buzzer system to keeping the door open (ib. p. 76 f.). At times small changes have big results, which seems encouraging in this complex framework. Furthermore, the above-mentioned interventions depict the importance of Lifeworld Orientation to serve the specific needs of a community; as established, Lifeworld oriented Social Work specifically recognises everyday experiences (e.g., gun violence) and coping strategies (e.g.,

bulletproof safeguard) as keys to tackling problems of life and implement change (Grunwald & Thiersch, 2016, p. 17).

In another interview, Elisa Schankle, manager of HealHouse, points out how the lack of representation may lead to PoC feeling unsafe. She herself felt harmed in white spaces during her journey to become a teacher and being an active member of the yoga community. Hence, employing PoC, is a way to support them financially, they need to feel “compensated and supported” (ib. p. 82). Subsequently, more clients will feel seen and use the space. She also identifies a crucial detail: feeling safe is vital when working towards mental health (ib. p. 79ff), as Graham also pointed out regarding the powerful role of being a teacher and how to deal with criticism.

5.2.3 Conclusion regarding Graham’s expertise in inclusion

Ending this review, a summary of several hands-on tips by Graham (ib. p. 119 f.) ensues.

Students can contribute by 1. actively inquiring about equity and inclusion strategies; 2. frequenting classes of PoC and especially South Asian teachers; 3. not feeling inapt to induce change, every action counts; and 4. accepting mistakes as part of the process.

Being a teacher racialised as white, we may 1. not speak for PoC teachers; 2. not call ourselves antiracist but rather do the work; 3. make a genuine effort to try to see the issues PoC, LGBTQ+, people with unconventional bodies face; 4. always be your toes to be an ally to PoC, help to make them comfortable to speak their truth; as well as, summarising the above, continuously self-reflect regarding race, social justice, and intersectional equity, which will help to deal with criticism in constructive ways. Graham also gives insight regarding enhancing teacher trainings and brands (ib. p. 122f and p. 124f., respectively); however, since there is no further, detailed reference regarding these fields in the remaining publications, particulars have been omitted.

5.3 Embodied Justice in Yoga for People of Color Sangha, Nousheen & González Madrigal

This publication is also considered qualitative evidence regarding the situation of PoC, as well as for ways to intercept the exclusion; both authors are women

of colour. Their backgrounds include “Critical Race Theory, Women of Color Feminisms, Queer and Trans of Color Critique, Critical Indigenous Studies, and Critical Ethnic Studies” (Nousheen & González Madrigal 2021, p. 16).

Both authors constitute how mostly “white yoga studios and meditation centres have been incapable of serving people of color. In fact, these spaces have been bastions of colorblindness, post-racialism, and cultural appropriation; many people of color have felt invisibilized and unsafe in these spaces” (ib. p. 17). They conclude that yoga in the US has not been a means of supporting PoC regarding racism but rather a result of white consumption; hence, white teachers would not be able to create safe and empowering spaces for PoC (ib. p. 17). As a response to this deficiency, they brought gatherings into being to discuss needs and ideas, creating a community beyond asanas and breathing exercises; they describe it as “a movement of people, coming and going, understanding our limited capacities as people of color healing from our traumas” (ib. p. 18). The classes, referred to as gatherings, include readings of texts aimed to unify race and spirituality (ib. p. 18). Sharing their experiences, participants reflect on the meetings, including implications regarding yoga for PoC and anti-racism (ib. p. 18). In contrast to regular yoga classes, the gatherings allowed to concentrate on “healing colonial, imperialist, capitalist, racial, gendered, and sexist traumas, individually, generationally, and ancestrally” (ib. 18); the attendees “felt freed from interacting and explaining issues to white people which allowed them to deeply work on a horizontal and comparative understanding of racism, and ‘see’ how race impacts us all differently. This supports a heartfelt and politicized solidarity across various minoritized groups, while unpacking our own internalized racism and healing together in a collective and coalitional way.” (ib. p. 18)

5.3.1 Community as an added value

The group also formulated baseline values for regular practices; what strikes me as being different from regular yoga classes is how this community allows time for exchange at the beginning of their meetings. Furthermore, they keep the door open so that people can join later or leave earlier depending on their needs and capabilities, medicines and prayers from people identifying as indigenous find a place (ib. p 18 f.). It seems remarkable that the practice takes

place in a circle and is opened by a volunteer speaking about “Indigenous land acknowledgments, sovereignty, presence, resilience, revitalization, and resurgence. At this time, the same member or another member affirms that [their] space is for infinite genders and sexualities, is body positive, and for all body capacities” (ib. p. 19). The class continues with members offering to lead the different sections, namely, warm-up and cool-down, main asana practice, meditation, or restorative practices. The gatherings come to an end, sharing a meal and having a closing discussion around insights or feelings that surfaced during the practice (ib. p. 19). In addition, there is time to speak about political issues and actions. In a Social Work context these baseline values can be described as supporting community development, an “umbrella concept [referring] to the conscious efforts of change agents that are aimed at achieving objectives within various spheres of community life.” (Engelbrecht, 2005, p. 144) Community work, as part of community development, entails methods Social Workers employ to facilitate changes, which are beneficial to a particular aspect of community life (ib. p. 144). Learning, growth and development processes focused on the needs of a group are to be furthered via strategies which were planned within the specific community (ib. p. 144).

A unique component of this approach to yoga, however in line with community work, is centring class around an individual. For example: “In one memorable gathering, a queer-identifying Black elder woman who is a regular member of the sangha requested to work on emotionally being seen and respected by the community; she has limited mobility as well as often dealt with joint pain. We designed the gathering for her healing that centred her needs. The yoga was gentle movement focusing on releasing joint pain, along with an affirming guided meditation specifically addressing her identity as a queer Black woman elder. In the sharing afterwards, she acknowledged that she felt nurtured and supported, and happy to have a practice where she did not need to make a single modification” (Nousheen & González Madrigal, 2021, p. 19). This resulted in members of the group feeling a greater level of empathy regarding elder Black people and promoted a feeling of commitment to terminating anti-Black racism.

Another key feature is the critical connection and accountability to South, East and Southeast Asia due to the political and spiritual commitment to yoga and meditation (ib. p. 20). Freire used the term Conscientisation to describe the need to offer opportunities to validate experiences, goals, culture and value systems in education (Engelbrecht, 2005, p. 146). The group in question examines colonialism and imperialism critically, studying “casteism, Hindu fundamentalism, global capitalism, and the ways in which yoga and meditation have been and are co-opted in Asia” (Nousheen & González Madrigal, 2021, p. 20). India having been under British control “and its post-colonial reality have institutionalized Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia, and casteism.” (ib. p. 20) However, Asian history is not the only issue to be critically examined; more recent events such as government oppression and silencing of resistance movements as occurred in India in 2020 (e.g., Thapar, 2022) may be discussed. Moreover, considerations are shared regarding implications of the cast system, beliefs or preferences minorized groups and also Asians living elsewhere exhibit, and feeling offended by “cultural appropriation, exclusion, and racism from predominantly white yoga studios and meditation centers” (Nousheen & González Madrigal, 2021, 20 f.) This political scope of the community yoga class seems in line with community work furthering Conscientisation through a “participatory, collective, action-reflection process that can only occur through dialogue” (Engelbrecht, 2005, p. 144). Nousheen & González Madrigal suggest employing intersectional approaches as baseline for exchanges, lest replicating colonial and imperial practices (2021, p. 21).

They furthermore point out the importance to critically revise how yoga and meditation reached the West, referring to the process as “a collusion between gurus and opportunists of both the East and West, yoga in the West was envisioned as a capitalist product to be bought for and by white people” (ib. p. 21). The main focus was to serve white Westerners excluding PoC and empowering “white people for furthering capitalism, white supremacy, and colonialism; because white dominant culture is rooted in capitalism, individualism, and productivity, yoga itself emphasizes fitness, business, and individual power” (ib. p. 21).

5.3.2 Conclusion regarding Nousheen's & González Madrigal's expertise on inclusion

The authors sought to create a yoga setting focussed on the needs of a specific PoC-community; they did so by asking questions regarding how to address and heal racialised generational trauma as well as how to create a healing yoga circle. "These questions make epistemological interventions into yoga. By taking overlapping racisms, colonialisms, and imperialisms into account, when people of color critically intervene in the practice of yoga and meditation, we realign and course correct the historical violent canon that yoga and meditation is." (ib. p. 23)

Summarising the above, the authors suggest creating an inclusive yoga space for PoC by employing PoC teachers for PoC students. They address PoC issues in class and point out the importance of having a PoC-only space to discuss amongst each other without the need to explain to non-PoC, therewith furthering solidarity throughout minorities. Furthermore, the class setting is designed to cater for the individuals; measures include ensuring access at any time, co-teaching and practising in a circle to ensure the active involvement of participants. Moreover, optionally designing classes around one person's issues (physical and/or mental) makes this person feel seen and heard; it also promotes empathy and a communal sense of proactiveness in the group. Last but not least, there are political components in the class, such as critical analyses of the colonial and imperialistic history as well as current issues plaguing South Asia, which are addressed employing an intersectional approach. In this context, it is also critically examined how yoga reached the West and how capitalism, white supremacy, etc. influenced the original school of thought along with ramifications concerning the current emphasis on fitness, business and individual power in yoga.

5.4 Enhancing Yoga Participation, Spadola et al

While not all authors of this Qualitative Investigation of Barriers and Facilitators to Yoga among Predominantly Racial/ Ethnic Minority, Low-Income Adults (Spadola et al, 2017) may consider themselves PoC, it seems crucial to include this research since it provides insights from medical perspectives (the authors

are affiliated with various medical institutions focusing on sleep, nutrition, pulmonary and critical care, neonatology and family medicine).

The research team draws on a few existing studies confirming the acceptability and benefits of yoga interventions geared towards ethnic minorities, pointing out that “the literature lacks a clear understanding of beliefs surrounding yoga and perceived barriers to yoga participation” (Spadola et al, 2017, p. 99). They also accentuate that most studies in the area have not included data from people who have not yet tried yoga, i.e., interviews, questionnaires, etc., have solely been conducted with practitioners post intervention. Hence, “the attitudes and perceptions of yoga among vulnerable populations who have no yoga experience or were lost to follow up during yoga intervention studies remain largely undocumented” (ib. p. 99). Consequently, Spadola et al conducted a qualitative investigation regarding “perceptions, barriers, and facilitators of yoga among racially/ethnically diverse adults both with and without yoga experience, recruited from a low-income housing community.” (ib. p. 99)

The research team employed the Social Contextual Model (SCM – a multi-level approach to grasp how psychosocial factors effect health behaviour) of Health Behaviour Change (Sorensen et al 2007, as per ib. p. 100) to inform their investigation and the setup of the focus group/interview guide (ib. p. 100). Eligibility of participants for the study population was defined as over 18 years of age, anglophone and having particular sleep issues (since this qualitative research ought to be the base for designing an intervention promoting healthy sleep), with and without yoga experience. Participants stemmed from a low-income housing community which also constituted the site where interviews were conducted, assuming it would enhance participation. The “theory-informed semi structured interview guide, was developed using the SCM model, to investigate multi-level barriers and facilitators to yoga practice.” (ib. p. 100) Participants could choose whether to take part in this individual interview or a focus group, both lasting one to two hours (ib. p. 100).

The cohort comprised 24 respondents, 19 of whom formed focus groups and five preferred the individual interview. About 60% of participants were part of

racial/ethnic minorities, 75% identified as female, almost 70% did not hold a college degree, and 50% were employed full-time.

5.4.1 Deterrents regarding yoga

The interviews and focus groups yielded several barriers regarding yoga. Participants perceived a lack of physical and/or weight loss advantages. There were concerns regarding safety and accessibility, especially for interviewees with a pre-existing ailment. Furthermore, time and scheduling issues posed barriers since professional and private obligations prevented regular attendance. Notable here is that the housing community of the participants features a gym, yoga classes and free or affordable childcare. (ib. p. 102 ff.)

5.4.2 Factors facilitating yoga practice

Amongst the themes which encouraged participants to engage in yoga classes, the most salient was the yoga teacher. Interviewees listed characteristics including “effective communication skills, personable, down-to earth, engaged, and knowledgeable” as well as relatable (ib. p. 104). There is an indication that a few women preferred a female-only class to alleviate stress regarding performing well. Some participants were inclined to join classes labelled as easy/beginner-friendly that progress gently. Generally, it seemed feasible to attend class once or twice per week for 30 to 90 minutes, while most preferred a 45-minute duration. Ideally there would be several timeslots in the morning and evening to account for changing schedules and afore mentioned issues. Regarding advertising, interviewees suggested that in their environment successful marketing should highlight: “Relaxation, stress reduction, physical health, and improved sleep” (ib. p. 104). Lastly participants were asked about the feasibility of a 20-minute home-practice in the evening. While there were concerns regarding space, living in a crowded home, interruptions by children, the absence of in-person instructions and feeling full from dinner, 20 minutes being too long, most interviewees thought it was doable. Probing which tool may facilitate their home-practice respondents preferred “access to several communication mediums including a paper booklet of yoga poses and an audio and/or video guiding them through the poses” (ib. p. 105)

5.4.3 Conclusion regarding Spadola et al's research

The study team applied their findings to the SCM model identifying modifying and mediating mechanisms influencing yoga class attendance as well as home practice. Modifying conditions from their data and literature were “beliefs and expectations surrounding yoga, family structure, work schedule, yoga class location, and home environment. From these modifying conditions, several mediating mechanisms were identified that target social norms, self-efficacy, and social supports” (ib. p. 105 f.).

The authors elaborate the following modifying conditions and their implications. Interestingly viewing “yoga as a relaxation tool or an activity to promote mental health” seems ambiguous since subsequent benefits may be an incentive to choose yoga over another activity. On the other hand, however, this view deems yoga as ineffective concerning weight loss and vigorous exercise. “This is also documented in the existing literature” (Spadola, 2017, p. 106). Further barriers are family structures and demands, especially participants with children anticipated struggling with attendance. Similarly, challenging work schedules were identified as hurdles. Regarding home practice, interviewees noted that environmental factors such as “lack of space, noise, and privacy, which can be amplified in low-income neighborhoods” (ib. p. 106) complicated their settings.

The authors add modifying conditions not prevalent in their research population but identified in literature. There are indications “that yoga practitioners are commonly perceived as mostly non-Hispanic white, athletic females of upper socio-economic status [...], potentially serving as a barrier to marginalized populations.” (ib. p. 106) Media representation solidifies these beliefs. Spadola et al also stress the importance of considering racial and/or ethnic barriers regarding yoga participation to diversify study populations and enhance minority representation. They document that while perceived religiosity of yoga was not an issue in their cohort, it may pose a barrier in other settings. Further obstacles are budgeting and transport (void in this research setting as classes were offered at participants' housing facilities and subsidised or free); particularly for neighbourhoods considered unsafe transport at night poses a barrier. (ib. p. 105 f.)

A crucial issue about modifying conditions is that they are based on ingrained beliefs and attitudes which are difficult to change (ib. p. 100). Mediating mechanisms, however, may be influenced by yoga stakeholders, ideally changing social norms regarding yoga. Therefore, promoting the relaxation benefits of yoga may be advantageous (ib. p. 107). It has also been salient and confirmed in prior studies that the yoga teacher plays a key role and can therefore be considered a mediating mechanism. "Research teams and yoga programs aiming to engage marginalized populations should not only consider the expertise of the yoga instructor, but also personality and teaching style." (ib. p. 107) The expertise of instructors will also be essential to conquer fears of injury; teachers who were attentive and knowledgeable regarding diverse abilities should serve as a catalyst to enhance self-efficacy (ib. p. 108). The third mechanism identified by Spadola et al is self-efficacy. Interviewees elaborated on the importance of following the class and being aware of what to expect before joining. Thus, yoga interventions should be customised to the experience of the class and descriptions included in marketing schemes (ib. p. 107). Regarding home practice, self-efficacy could, as per the participants, be promoted by providing a collection of instructions (written with images and audio-visual). Taking scheduling and location into consideration should be an asset in enabling potential students to attend group settings. This may include childcare if not on site as in Spadola et al's setting (ib. p. 108). Lastly, the research team encourages, based on several studies, portraying diverse yoga practitioners and settings in promotional material to address the popular belief that yoga practitioners are predominantly non-Hispanic white and of higher socio-economic status (ib. p. 108)

6. Literature review regarding yoga settings and People with Disabilities

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPWD) state the rights of people with disabilities in Art. 30, paragraph 5 seems to be most fitting regarding the question if there is a legal basis for rendering yoga classes accessible, which can be considered a call for action for Social Work acting as stakeholder:

“With a view to enabling persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:

- a) To encourage and promote the participation, to the fullest extent possible, of persons with disabilities in mainstream sporting activities at all levels;
- b) To ensure that persons with disabilities have an opportunity to organize, develop and participate in disability-specific sporting and recreational activities and, to this end, encourage the provision, on an equal basis with others, of appropriate instruction, training and resources;
- c) To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to sporting, recreational and tourism venues; [...]" (UN, n.d.)

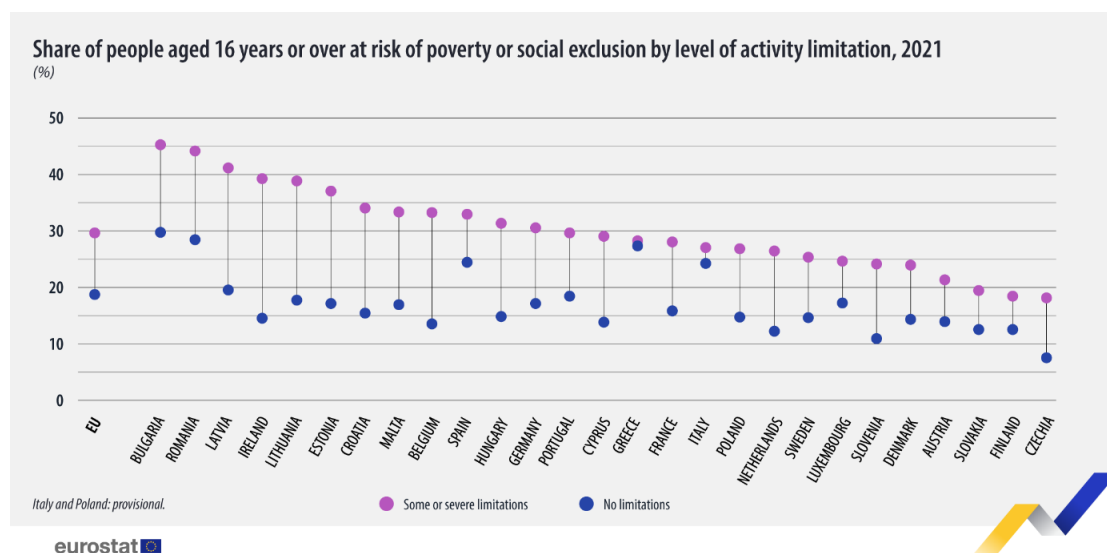
As it has been established that there is a legal basis promoting participation in recreational activities, this section will provide insight concerning inclusion barriers and facilitating aspects for PwD regarding yoga settings. It will be a challenge to paint a cohesive picture for PwD as they can by no means be considered a cohesive group. Furthermore, there is little research specifically examining PwD and yoga; however, some papers and approaches from therapeutic yoga provide insightful (mostly) qualitative data regarding the efficacy of yoga in a special needs context. Thomas et al, e.g., state: “Yoga is widely advertised as a practice that promotes a variety of health benefits, including lower blood pressure, increased joint mobility, improved quality of life, and reduced stress.[...] The asanas and pranayama practiced in yoga may be especially beneficial for people with physical disabilities [...] including arthritis, chronic pain, multiple sclerosis (MS), osteoporosis, and Parkinson’s disease.[...] Pilot studies examining yoga participation among people with MS-related disability and spinal cord injury suggest that yoga programs are safe and feasible, and that participants experienced postintervention improvements in quality of life and physical and mental functioning.” (2018, p. 69) McIvor et al also determined beneficial effects for young people (age 5-17 years) struggling with autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, cerebral palsy as well as attention deficit hyperactive disorder. The research

team concluded “a positive correlation [...] between yoga interventions and increased performance in described functional activities for children with a developmental disability” (McIvor et al, 2021, p. 3). Furthermore, they detected that prolonged yoga practice yielded superior results regarding functional mobility and self-esteem compared to physical exercise; in addition, an increase in social skills and attention was observed (ib., p. 3 f.).

6.1 Socioeconomic situation of People with Disabilities

Drawing conclusions regarding correlations between SES and the health of PwD is as complex as for PoC. Likewise, however, a brief compilation of facts around such interdependencies should shed light on the situation of many people with special needs and why it is important to live inclusion in movement settings. As the American Psychological Association (APA) states, “SES is a consistent and reliable predictor of a vast array of outcomes across the life span, including physical and psychological health. Thus, SES is relevant to all realms of behavioral and social science, including research, practice, education, and advocacy.” (APA, 2010, n.p.)

Despite numerous legal developments to enhance inclusion and participation of DP in all areas of life (e.g., the UN convention mentioned), poverty rates and undereducation remain high amongst PwD, as per APA (ib.). The situation in Europe is similar:



III. 2

As the graphic (III. 2) shows, people with some or severe limitations are, throughout Europe, at a higher risk of being affected by poverty or social exclusion. For example, 29.7% of Europeans aged 16 and above with activity

limitations were at risk regarding poverty and social exclusion, more than 10% more than those without disabilities (Eurostat, 2022, n.p.).

Similar issues are reported for the Asian-Pacific region; there is “consistent evidence and support for the association of disability with higher levels of poverty and deprivation, and insufficient and vulnerable livelihoods which resulted in and contributed to poverty.” (Krairiksh et al 2012, p. 32)

As established, education and employment are crucial factors regarding SES; health and well-being, however, may further both and can, therefore, be regarded as the most relevant element in the context of yoga and inclusion. As per APA, the correlation between decreased levels of SES and health, as well as quality of life, can be explained by emotional stress for PwD and their families. In addition, access to health care can be limited due to the lack of accessibility such as transportation, communication issues, insurance and/or financial concerns. There is evidence for increased quality of life and manageability of health care costs further to health promotion interventions aimed at PwD. (APA, 2010, n.p.)

The question arises why there are few yoga interventions specifically geared towards PwD since the above-mentioned merits of yoga should benefit people with special needs and their families. While this query cannot be answered in the current context, the elaboration on the publications below shall provide some insight regarding the factors which need observing when designing such interventions.

6.2 Verification of inclusion factors and barriers for People with Disabilities regarding yoga

Based on the above, there are a number of factors relevant to inclusion and Social Work. As for PoC, the following paragraphs explore factors which facilitate participation in yoga classes for PwD according to three publications which seemed most relevant to the topic. Generally, several publications report the effects of yoga interventions, especially therapeutic yoga, for specific conditions (as in the examples above). However, research specifically regarding the reasons for not seeing more people with special needs in yoga settings seems scarce. Hence, this literature research also followed the

principle of examining relevant papers in depth in order to draw conclusions regarding accessibility and appeal of yoga classes for PwD.

6.2.1 Disability, Yoga, and Transformation, Newborn

Newborn published her journey following a stroke at the age of 21 years, which caused a right-sided hemiparesis and aphasia and memory loss (2002, p. 1). She received a multitude of physical and speech therapies; it took five months of intense work and enormous psychological effort until she experienced her first victory which was being able to slightly move her paralysed arm: "This time I had to find a way to calm down. Taking one long breath, I shut my eyes and concentrated one more time. Totally unaware of anything else in the room, I found myself focused on the electric current running through my arm. I saw the movement before it happened. As time stopped, my mind connected with my arm's energy. In slow motion my arm became aware of this signal and hesitantly moved an inch. I was amazed and thrilled at the impact of this magic." (ib. p. 2) Breathing exercises helped her connect with what she calls her intuition, a sensation of "oneness" (ib. p. 3) as well as feeling connected. Hence, she notes that "breath and meditation began [her] journey to freedom" (ib. p. 3). She went back to university and, exploring alternative healing approaches, found yoga. She appreciated the social component of yoga and felt classes were a safe space; however, she struggled with asanas. Through breathing and patience, she gradually unlocked ways to feel comfortable in postures and learnt "to look at [herself] not through losses and disability, but through discovering new ways of movement and direction" (ib. p. 3), which led to experience self-efficacy through persistence. When she partook in a training program in India, she struggled anew doing asanas as she felt perfectionism was expected; furthermore, her speech impairment made it difficult for her to remember and pronounce mantras, etc. Despite those challenges, Newborn acquired a teaching certificate and started giving classes after she returned to New York. Her insecurities regarding teaching asanas perfectly and her speech persisted. She also worked as "rehabilitation counselor for young adults with head injury and stroke" (ib. p. 4) and notes: "I started to see that many of my clients were psychologically lost and in need of hope. They did not know what to do with their lives. Their tragic accidents forced them out of their daily routine into chaos. They no longer knew what they were capable of. In

their disordered state, they were very insecure and lonely, often isolated physically, mentally, and spiritually. They were further cut off from society by prejudice; they had lost their sense of belonging.” (ib. p. 4) Consequently, she started introducing her clients to yoga via individualised programs taught at their homes. Being in this private environment, she observed that her clients had lost their independence, becoming dependent on family members also for chores they would have been able to complete themselves. Newborn points out that yoga is a means to reattain personal and social reintegration (ib. p. 5). “Within a year, many of these clients were not only physically better but mentally and emotionally improved as well.” (ib. p. 5) Feeling the need for guidance and expertise, Newborn returned to India to learn more about teaching yoga to severely disabled people (she did not find any program in the U.S.). She found teachers who had designed individual programs as per students’ needs for nearly twenty years. Their students also progressed severely within about a year, employing “the right combination of adaptive âsanas and prânâyâma.” (ib. p. 5).

6.2.2 Methodology for yoga classes for People with Disabilities as per Newborn

Further to her learnings, Newborn could establish the following system for teaching PwD (ib. p. 6 ff.):

1. The purpose of the practice needs to be determined. It will vary individually. The teacher’s challenge is to listen to students and adjust for changes in mood, body and environment.
2. Letting go of stress is vital to achieving steady and comfortable movement, whereas feeling tension usually causes rigidity. Guided progressive relaxation, yoga-nidra and breathing exercises are key to putting body and mind at ease. Those may be employed at the beginning of a class and between postures.
3. The spine becomes the gauge regarding alignment; teacher and student “focus on how each pose feels on the student’s spine” (ib. p. 7). The spine is considered the element which connects the entire body; once its functions improve, the entire body is stabilised.

4. Working on the foundation and grounding is crucial in the context of disabilities since the sense of balance and coordination may be severely impaired. Employing props such as chairs, tables, etc., is therefore vital to adapt poses to students' needs.

5. These adaptations also aid in changing students' perception regarding their bodies' (in-)abilities. Newborn suggests never putting a new student into challenging positions; instead, she finds out about their needs and goals in conversations and observes how their bodies and minds react when practising postures, which are comparably easy for them. This prevents injuries and promotes healing.

6. Asana postures are practised via repetitive, gentle, and slow movement. When holding the asana would initially be forceful and uncomfortable, it should be practised in "intelligent orderly steps" (ib. p. 9). Such slow and conscious movements enhance the feedback between muscles and brain, thereby improving students' physical condition.

7. Breathing exercises effect the nervous system; they are a tool to enhance a sense of personal control as well as physical recovery. The breath also indicates discomfort in asana practice; shallow, accelerated, or uneven breathing suggests excessive effort and potential injury (ib. p. 10).

8. Meditation is a powerful tool to calm bruised minds and find inner peace from an "outer world [which] may seem cruel and may no longer make any sense" (ib. p. 10). Guided meditations help feel one's body, soothe minds to think more clearly, and experience serenity.

9. People with severe disabilities frequently struggle with depression, especially in the phase when treatment comes to an end. They may feel frustrated and lonely, being left without support and a daunting long-term prognosis. Yoga teachers should be compassionate and offer a caring, safe and comfortable environment.

Newborn also works with a detailed questionnaire which pre-assesses students' initial abilities (ib. p. 11 f.).

6.2.3 Conclusion regarding Newborn's experience

The author reports feeling that yoga classes were a safe space to start with, contrary to the experience of the PoC-authors discussed above. Developing or enhancing self-efficacy is seen as a crucial benefit of (therapeutic) yoga and translates into life skills supporting inclusion beyond a yoga environment. The fact that Newborn started working with individualised programs (as common in therapeutic yoga) is essential regarding self-efficacy; furthermore, it helped clients develop life perspectives, insecurity, loneliness, isolation and perceived prejudice; furthermore, her programs promoted a sense of belonging and independence which helped regain personal and social integration. To draw further conclusions regarding how to make yoga classes more attractive and accessible for PwD, it would have been interesting to assess the structure and settings of Newborn's classes, in case she also teaches in group settings. While teaching in a one-on-one setting and practising by oneself has specific benefits, as mentioned above, it seems class settings harbour great potential and should therefore be part of therapeutic yoga approaches for PwD in particular. However, Newborn's experiences provide great insight into the barriers and advancements of a special-needs yoga journey, and her conclusions may be put into practice in a class setting if this setting is similar to, e.g., Ashtanga classes, during which each student practices the asanas they are currently working on.

6.3 Yoga for everyone, Regan et al

This qualitative research of a community yoga class for PwD, conducted by Regan et al provides insights precisely about class structures and advantages of group settings. The study group combine results of research regarding the benefits of yoga for people with physical issues as follows:

“Physical improvements and the implementation of coping strategies from yoga participation has been noted to benefit people experiencing a wide range of health conditions including low back pain, osteoarthritis, breast cancer, stroke and multiple sclerosis [...]. Because yoga has been shown to improve maladaptive coping, mindfulness and social support, it may be particularly useful for people who are struggling to

maintain regular PA [Physical Activity] due to disability” (Regan et al 2022, p. 401).

The researchers also established that studies have predominantly focussed on certain conditions or disabilities within a specified timeframe (ib. p. 401); they, conversely, concentrate on a scheme named Yoga for Everyone (YFE). That is a weekly “donation-based community yoga class” with a trainer specialised in adaptive yoga training (ib. p. 401). The line between adaptive and therapeutical yoga is blurred; this may be due to similar approaches to the field as per yoga school (Iyengar, for example, has a specific therapeutic branch) and linguistic choices; to give a general definition, it can be said that adaptive yoga is about making postures suitable for all bodies by modifying positions themselves or employing props (blocks, chairs, etc.); furthermore, breathwork is considered equally important as asanas (e.g., Stephens, 2017, p. 157 ff.).

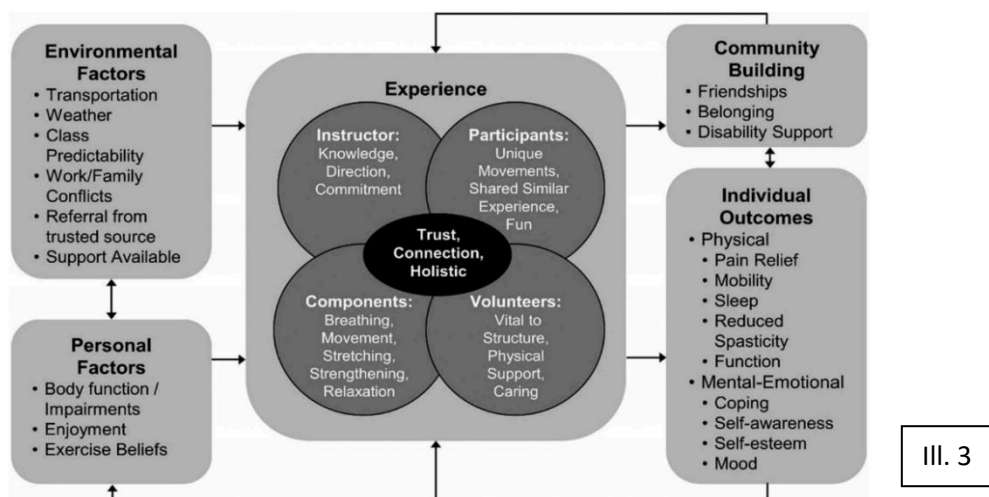
YFE classes are formed by up to ten participants with different physical and mental issues as well as trained volunteers assisting participants as per the teacher’s instructions. The class lasts 60 mins, starting with an “opening discussion, yoga postures, breathing techniques, and a relaxation period” (Regan et al, 2022, p. 401). Regan et al sought to gain insight into the “perceptions and experiences of individuals with physical disability who are habitual participants in the YFE class to inform future research and community programs. [As well as] identifying strategies to create or improve sustainable community PA programs for those with disability has potential to improve health and quality of life” (ib. p. 402). They employed qualitative approaches evaluating participants’ assessments of their yoga experience throughout five months. Data was retrieved from in-depth personal interviews, class observations and disability questionnaires (ib. p. 402). The inclusion criteria for the voluntary, confidential partaking were: 1. Adult, ages 18 years or older; 2. Self-identified physical impairments; 3. Ability to communicate directly in an interview format; and 4. participation in the class at least twice per month over the last three months. (ib. p. 402)

Their final study cohort comprised “50% (n = 3 of 6) female, with varied physical disabilities and diagnoses. WHODAS disability scores ranged 6% –

47% (0 = no disability, 100 = full disability)” (ib. p. 403). The World Health Organisation Disability Assessment Schedule (WHODAS) is an instrument to assess health and disability levels in clinical and scientific settings. The latest version apprehends functioning in six categories, namely cognition, mobility, self-maintenance, social skills, life activities and participation (Üstün et al 2012, p. 12).

6.3.1 Regan et al’s findings

While the range of outcomes based on the qualitative study design was varied, they can be grouped into physical benefits, mental and emotional improvements. The crucial result was community building, i.e., forming meaningful friendships, diversity support and a notion of belonging (Regan et al, 2020, p. 403). The following illustration (ill. 3) summarises the findings of the Regan et al:



The researchers point out external factors which influenced participants’ experience. It seems vital to bear in mind that PwD are often more affected by weather conditions, e.g., rain can make safe routes slippery, rendering the journey dangerous. Hence, factors which may not be obvious to able-bodied people are to be taken seriously since PwD cannot take free movement for granted. A facilitating factor is scheduling the class weekly and, at the same time, enabling participants to plan with aides, caregivers, etc. Regan et al noted that programming the class in the evening was ambiguous since it was an advantage for those who worked during the day, and a drawback for people needing assistance (typically, professional aides have more availability during the day) (ib. p. 3). Personal factors were also included in the assessment, e.g.,

unpredictable symptoms, which made attending the class impossible, but also enjoying the class and feeling a need for exercise as incentives to attend. The presence of assistants enabled participants to move and stretch in ways they had not been able to achieve on their own, which motivated people to attend weekly since they noticed a difference if they missed classes (ib. p. 404).

As previously mentioned, the class followed a particular protocol, which seems important, especially for people with mental issues, e.g., people with memory problems benefit greatly from repeating structures. Furthermore, auxiliaries “such as bolsters, straps and blocks were used to facilitate positioning and safety, provided to each participant at the beginning of class, and utilized based on instructor guidance or participant request. Safety was enhanced by participant’s selfknowledge, instructor knowledge and attention, and assisting participants to and from the floor with one to two person assists or four-person dependent lifts” (ib. p. 405) – especially notable seems taking self-knowledge seriously. While this is present in therapeutic yoga approaches, it seems often neglected in regular classes. Regan et al’s participants experienced classes as “fun and relaxing. They appreciate the physical sensations, the effort of exercise, and the focused relaxation. All six participants expressed a feeling of relaxation during class” (ib. p. 405). While stretching and moving were rated the most valuable aspects, breathing and meditating were appreciated as crucial components (ib. p. 405). Interestingly participants pointed out that despite their diverse abilities and limitations, they did not differentiate between each other but participated in a shared experience. Another constant was the appreciation of the expertise of the instructor, particularly regarding “skills and knowledge in directing volunteers and in teaching varying levels of disability” (ib. p. 405). Since many PwD have experience regarding physical therapy treatments, it seems worthwhile to include that study participants noted that breathing and relaxation techniques provided an added value comparing yoga to physical therapy. Moreover, attaining approval, cost, the intermittent nature and physical therapists’ motivation were rated as complicated and therefore, yoga as preferable (ib. p. 405). Individual outcomes of the community yoga class included physical and psychological improvements. For example, “pain relief, mobility benefits, improved sleep, and functional outcomes. Impairments including muscle spasticity, spasms, tightness, and movement difficulties were

noted as issues neglected in the past, or that were a struggle related to their disability that improved with the yoga class.” (Ib. p. 405) Emotionally, participants experienced enhanced “coping, selfacceptance, body connection, and accomplishment.” (ib. p. 405) Community building could also be achieved through attendance and dedication. Not only did participants connect and develop friendships (ib. p 407), also the exchange with volunteers was highly valued (ib. p. 405). Attendees with chronic ailments found it beneficial to meet regularly (ib. p. 407).

The research team concludes that “regular participation in community yoga to be related to overcoming key barriers, multifaceted individual outcomes, a supportive class structure with a non-medical focus, and a sense of belonging within a group” (ib. p. 407).

The authors identify a holistic approach, rather than an ailment-based focus, as unique to yoga. While participants noted that breathing and meditation exercises might be added to any physical activity in order to achieve similar results regarding relaxation, connection with self, reduced anxiety or sleep issues, they appreciated a shift towards overall health and well-being (ib. p. 407). Furthermore, not concentrating on a particular area of the body, as common in physical therapy, but on “body awareness, energy, and mood in physical postures, breathwork and relaxation, the intent also goes beyond the physical and addresses mental and emotional health as well.” (ib. p. 407) This corresponds to prioritising the person, rather than focussing on what they can or cannot do, allowing participants to connect in a similar way, sharing a human experience and moments of unity within a community (ib. p. 407). The sense of community based on “fellowship with common values” (ib. p. 407) was also enhanced by the teacher’s expertise as well as their care and commitment, which were also exhibited by the volunteers (ib. p. 407). It also seems noteworthy that most participants desired to continue practising in a mixed ability class, as they appreciated the diversity, especially since it prevents labels as per diagnosis (ib. p. 407). Hence, when organising classes for PwD, it is not desirable to continue a common practice of grouping people as per the issues they experience. This can be considered an asset regarding sustainability, i.e., it is more likely a special needs class can be maintained if it

is open to all people who want to join as opposed to a class specifically for people with hemiparesis, e.g. (ib. p. 407). If concerns regarding expertise and suitable assistance call for subdividing PwD-yoga-classes, it may be advantageous to group as per core abilities, e.g., one class for people employing wheeled locomotion, another class for people with balance impairments (ib. p. 407). Yet another intriguing aspect the authors address is for medical professionals to work interdisciplinary. In this case, it should be advantageous if physical therapists or rehabilitation facilities can advise on classes specifically for PwD. Therewith, the affected person is not left to their own devices looking for continuous exercise, and community and medical professionals can provide helpful insight “to provide support for trainers and community members with disability to insure safety while exercising” (ib. p. 408).

6.3.2 Conclusion regarding Regan et al’s findings

The class set up of maximum ten PwD with different issues, plus trained assistants, proved successful on various levels. Employing probs at request or the teacher’s instruction enabled attendees to participate as per their body’s needs. The expertise and attentiveness of the instructor were highly valued by the participants and ensured safe practice. Also, focussing on paying heed to and fostering the participants’ self-knowledge was reported as highly advantageous. Regan et al furthermore point out how interdisciplinary work should be beneficial regarding the efficacy of treatments.

In this context, it seems significant what participants noted regarding the differences between the community yoga classes and physical therapy: Breath work and relaxation provided an added value. The fact that yoga classes follow a regular schedule was perceived as advantageous compared to intermittent treatments, which are based on approval and often subject to higher costs. Moreover, not targeting a specific body part or issue, but rather focusing on body awareness, energy, perceptions during asanas, breathwork and relaxation improved mental and emotional well-being in addition to physical health. The reason given was that prioritising the person, rather than abilities, furthered the connection between the participants and created a shared experience, as well as a sense of unity within this yoga community.

Participants also appreciated having a shared experience despite diverse issues; they preferred a diverse group set-up compared to ailment-based classes (which are common) since diversity prevents labels as per diagnosis. This can be considered a win-win situation since mixed classes should be more sustainable. One ought to bear the importance of the teacher's expertise in mind, however, and, if necessary, support teachers in attaining the required knowledge to maintain diversity and best practice.

Another factor making participation in class feasible was its structure, i.e., discussion, asanas, breath work, and relaxation. This reliable sequence specifically facilitated fathoming and following the class for people with mental impairments. Weekly classes at the same time and location enhanced plannability and tackled external factors which may prevent attendance, such as the weather, transport, etc.

Since providing a sustainable set-up is crucial from an economic point of view (for teachers and participants alike) as well as an incentive to try yoga, regular attendance should be facilitated. This includes taking personal factors seriously; teachers may seek to embrace that some people need to adhere to their bodies and/or circumstances rather than weekly schedules, carers might have to cancel, assistive equipment may break, etc. Criticising noncompliance to the schedule may, however, be less constructive than opening a conversation defining what prevents attendance and finding solutions jointly. As Regan et al reported, the class timing was ambiguous; hence, it seems vital to poll participants' availabilities before scheduling classes or if attendance is subpar.

A unique feature of YFE was the presence of assistants. Their support improved efficacy and, therewith, understanding and motivation to regular attendance. Compliance and dedication, in turn, promoted community building – participants reported making friends, enjoying the connection between participants and also volunteers and PwD.

Finally, participants reported a multitude of perceived benefits of the yoga intervention, such as fun and relaxation, pain relief, mobility benefits, improved sleep and functional outcomes. Also, emotionally enhanced coping, self-acceptance, body connection, and accomplishment. Presumably, sharing their

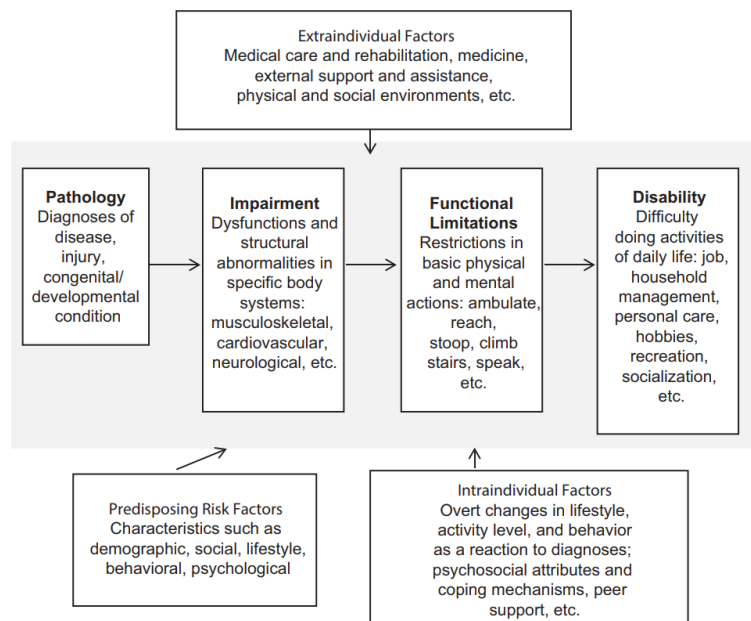
experience would be a huge incentive to join a class, i.e., including testimonials in marketing strategies should spark other PwD curiosity and point the way to more representation of PwD in advertising and community prescribed interventions (as opposed to able-bodied/-minded people deciding what is good for PwD).

6.4 Yoga is for every (able) body, Thomas et al

As media representation has played an important role in forging people's perception, Thomas et al created a content analysis of disability themes within mainstream yoga media. One point of departure was that access to practices furthering well-being should be regarded particularly important for PwD as rates of depression are ten times higher amongst them (Thomas et al, 2019, p. 69). The research team points out that disparities in health and access to care among PwD "are influenced by many upstream social factors, including environmental barriers (e.g., transportation and lack of accessible equipment in medical offices) and social barriers (e.g., lack of social support and discrimination)." (ib. p. 69) "Furthermore, scholars and activists question if the predominant representation in media of yoga practitioners may restrict who considers to be welcome into the community. This research draws on previous studies which established a lack of media representation of men, older people, PoC and people with larger bodies. Based on the thesis that the lack of medial representation may deter people considering themselves part of one or several minority groups to try yoga, even though it would be beneficial to their health" (ib. p. 69).

Exploring this thesis, Thomas et al examined images and texts of a specific section in the magazine *Yoga Journal* ("YJ is considered the premier mainstream yoga-related print magazine, first published in 1975. It has 12 editions published in 28 Western and non-Western countries and reported a 2017 readership of 1.8 million" [ib. p. 69]) along the line of Verbrugge and Jette's disablement model. This model describes disablement processes as per Nagi; in a nutshell, Nagi explains the course as starting with a pathology which leads to impairment and subsequently functional limitations, which, in turn, are regarded as a disability when persisting. Verbrugge & Jette added three socio-cultural factors influencing disablement as well as crucial factors

for people assuming disability “as a social identity or lifelong status” (ib. p. 68), as shown in the illustration below (III. 4).



III. 4 The disablement model (adapted from Verbrugge and Jette, 1994)

6.4.2 Thomas et al's findings

They found that in the Yoga Journal section and issues they studied, 83.3% of models were female, 100.0% Caucasian or European-American, 38.9% in their 30s (notably 22.2% of models were 60+ years). 72.2% seemed to be below average weight (as per the BMI scheme), 16.7% fell into the average and 11.1% into the slightly overweight category. Disability was neither to be seen in any image (ib. p. 70), nor mentioned in the analysed texts, even though various “references were made to the constructs of pathology, impairment, and functional limitation” (ib. p. 70). Such constructs point to early disablement stages or temporary conditions which may be altered by exercise and are less likely to affect the general quality of life (ib. p. 71). While this is of value for people experiencing disability due to ageing or chronic ailments (ib. p. 71), it excludes people born with impairments and/or living with severe disabilities. The research team concludes that despite considerable evidence regarding yoga being beneficial to PwD, YJ choose to omit PwD – as well as PoC – from their imagery. This may convey that yoga is only fit for able-bodied people (ib. p. 70 f.). Furthermore, Thomas et al point out that constructs occurring later in the disablement process (as per the disablement model mentioned above)

reflecting aspects of disability as an identity or long-term condition were not included in texts; hence, environmental and social hurdles are disregarded (ib. p. 72).

6.4.3 Conclusion regarding Thomas et al's findings

The research conducted by Thomas et al stresses a critical factor about inclusion in general, namely representation and how mainstream media and normative constructions influence participation. Since changing existing structures in yoga settings can already be challenging, it may seem even more daunting to realise that it is still a long way until society as a whole becomes more inclusive and appreciative of diversity. Nevertheless, it seems vital to induce sustainable and profound change rather than treating symptoms, but not the problem itself. Despite the relatively small sample examined by Thomas et al, the above text seemed crucial to include in this paper not only to point towards the issue of representation but also, to convey that steps towards solutions do not necessarily need to be hard to implement. In other words, it is not a tricky feat to include images of PoC, PwD, etc., in magazines, websites, promotional material, etc. To do so, treating (in this case) diverse models respectfully and not falling into the trap of token representation, as mentioned above regarding token PoC-employees, is, in turn, a real challenge. However, facing this challenge should be part of the journey to more inclusive societies and harbour many learning opportunities for normatively coined people and systems.

7. Results

To answer the research question - i.e., how to enhance yoga classes in order to render them more accessible and attractive to diverse students? - it seems apt to compile results (generated employing the PQRS-system as outlined in the introduction) in a manner which makes them applicable to different perspectives. It will always be challenging to generate an output incorporating multiple perspectives for the reasons discussed below. For the current paper, the subdivision into actions students, teachers and studios can take, as well as including environmental factors, seemed useful, and compiling the experiential input regarding class set-ups which effects the three previously mentioned categories.

	PoC	PwD
Students	<p><u>Do:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - actively inquire about equity and inclusion strategies - frequent classes of PoC, especially South Asian teachers <p><u>Do not:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - feel inapt to induce change, every action counts - accept mistakes as part of the process 	
Teachers	<p><u>Do:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - make a thorough effort to try realise what issues PoC/BIPOC and minority groups face - your best to be an ally, help to make PoC feel comfortable to speak their truth - continuously self-reflect about race, social justice, intersectional equity (it helps to) - deal with criticism in constructive ways - exhibit expertise and be relatable <p><u>Do not:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - speak <i>for</i> PoC teachers - deem yourself antiracist; instead, do the work 	<p><u>Do:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - embody expertise and attention - support participants in connecting with their bodies/minds (rather than superimposing) - focus on body awareness, energy, and perceptions during asanas rather than individual body parts - work interdisciplinarily (e.g., with GP, physical therapist) - take personal issues seriously (participants' downtimes, schedule changes, etc.) - if possible, coordinate class schedule with participants
Studios	<p><u>Do:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - structure inclusion projects employing tools and/or expert help (e.g., RIED) that further openness, compassion, experimenting, provide insight into persisting structures and monitor goals, processes and needs - employ QA-process to monitor changes - strive for a team culture which furthers ambiguity tolerance, listening, reviewing power structures, transparent recognition, constructive conflict resolution - ensure prolonged commitment, especially by senior management - provide training - diversify marketing regarding imaging and class levels - subsidise classes to alleviate the financial burden 	<p><u>Do:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - include testimonials in marketing strategies, and - seek representation through images, mentioning in texts, employ teachers with disabilities <p><u>Do not:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - group participants as per ailments/issues
Class set-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PoC-only spaces enable discussion without the need to educate non-PoC, therewith furthering solidarity throughout minority groups - catering for the needs of the individuals enhances participation - co-teaching, pot. varying the physical setup (e.g., practice in a circle) - pot. centre classes around individuals' issues - adding a social/political dimension, e.g., colonial history, history of yoga, fitness focus, may be crucial to address participants' needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individualized classes further self-efficacy and well-being - group settings benefit from reliable structures (e.g., discussion, asanas, breath work, relaxation) - max. 10 students plus assistants - ample time for breathing and relaxation exercises - priority on the people rather than their abilities (unlike in ailment-based setups)
External factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - facilitate transport (especially in unsafe areas) - ample scheduling of drop-in classes enables participation - check about available childcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - regular scheduling is vital for planning - affect PoD to a greater extent and should therefore be discussed jointly

7.1 Discussion of results

Based on the results presented in the table above, I will now elicit further on crucial aspects. Regarding students, the suggestion to actively strive for change seems ambiguous; without educating oneself regarding advocacy and how to use privileged positions in life to induce change without patronising, privileged people may inadvertently push PoC to “relive their trauma to educate others without their consent” (Ijoma et al, 2021, p. 357). This also entails a realistic look at resources, i.e., is a person able and willing to achieve this and also, if individuals in class decide they are not capable of doing that, what does that mean for a group that is dedicated to specific issues – will that person be excluded, does enhancing inclusion mean exclusion for others? This seems contrary to the goal of “working towards an ideal when all exclusionary pressures within education and society are removed.” (Booth 2003, p. 2).

Evaluating steps teachers may take, this issue becomes even more prevalent. Earning a living as a yoga teacher often means living precariously oneself (Mintz, 2017). Hence, it might simply not be feasible to invest time, money, and effort into inclusion for many teachers. Similarly, with yoga studios, there are certainly places and chains that generate sufficient revenue to introduce sustainable quality procedures regarding inclusion; small and medium-sized studios are likely to struggle in this respect, especially after prolonged downtimes and/or adaptations due to the Covid-19-pandemic. Also, the implications of offering classes for PwD, PoC (or other minority groups) specifically need to be evaluated as per the pertaining circumstances, to adequately reflect the needs of a community based on their lifeworld. On a practical level, it will also be challenging to sustain yoga classes for PwD, especially with assistants, without charging high fees (in an already pricey movement landscape), therewith rendering an inclusion-measure void.

What poses challenges on the market may be an asset regarding yoga in Social Work, however. One of the merits of practising yoga in a Social Work setting would be access to funds around inclusion, health interventions, etc., as well as facilities and networks in various neighbourhoods. Such funds and resources can be employed for training and offering classes detached from the

pressure of making sufficient revenue. Moreover, Social Workers should, through their education and practice, have a substantial basis regarding respectful and sustainable ways of approaching diverse students, class structures, etc. As the results indicate, however, it would be essential to provide the necessary education to ensure sufficient expertise, which is vital to enable qualified employees to not only express good intentions while lacking the means to translate those into sustainable actions (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018, p. 253). Especially regarding networking, Social Work structures seem to lend themselves much more to furthering exchange and goal-oriented collaboration since there is no competition among the parties. Of course, it would be wonderful to already work in settings appreciating degrowth, sustainable development, etc.; however, ignoring that yoga teachers and studio owners need to make a living in the present world characterised by capitalism and competition is not a solution either. As Regan et al suggest, widening interdisciplinary approaches and seeking collaborations to combine the expertise of yoga teachers/studios with the knowledge and resources Social Work has to offer should give way to diverse, sustainable approaches. Further components making Social Work a fertile ground for inclusive yoga (and holistic bodywork) should be the prolonged, in-depth engagement with advocacy and the issue of multiple perspectives as, e.g., discussed by Staub-Bernasconi (2016). Being aware of the issues that come with speaking for people by proxy, evaluating data which cannot be assessed from a personal but an external standpoint, etc., should prove as an asset and avoid superimposed measures which may or may not resonate with the target group(s). Another facet requiring expertise and ambiguity tolerance concerns the choice of approach in inclusion attempts. As discussed previously, this paper incorporates views based on an intersectional approach, such science-informed concepts can be helpful in structuring research. At the same time, it seems worthwhile, and particularly feasible in a Social Work (or scientific) context, to observe the implications of the model applied and how the outcomes of exemplary research need to be processed to generate practicable results.

7.2 Research situation

As the number of reviewed publications and the small sample sizes in existing qualitative studies indicate, the current body of research makes it difficult to draw comprehensive conclusions. For the reasons given previously regarding the specific benefits of holistic bodywork for people in precarious situations, it seems important to widen and deepen research in this area, e.g., in the light of Lifeworld Orientation: “Practice maxims are prevention, everyday relevance, regionalisation, integration and participation.” (Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009) Furthermore, the concept stresses the importance of respect and negotiation as well as issues deriving from the “depoliticising of social problems and the reduction of social care to controlling functions” (ib., p. 1). Interpreted for the current context, this means, it will be necessary to better understand the deterrents and incentives of practising yoga from an insider perspective, which in turn, seems achievable through qualitative and quantitative data for affected groups.

Spadola et al identify perceived religiosity as a potential barrier (2017, p. 107); it has been surprising, however, to confirm the lack of research regarding yoga and spirituality (Csala et al, 2021, n.p.). How does that connect to the issues around yoga participation? While “religion is typically an institutionalized and culturally accepted system of faith [...] spirituality refers to an autonomous, individual experience, which does not necessarily exclude religious endeavors [...]. In traditional yogic terminology, spirituality refers to the spirit or soul, i.e., the innermost core of every human being, which can also be interpreted as pure consciousness.” (Csala et al, 2021, n.p.). Laypeople, however, are not likely to establish this differentiation between religion and spirituality. Hence, taking part in a yoga class, which includes chanting, incense, images of gods, etc. may not feel inviting for individuals with a firmly rooted belief system in place, as it creates conflict with that prevalent spiritual practice and/or lifestyle choice. It, therefore, seems crucial to include spiritual aspects in future research lest overlooking a potential modifying condition which, as per Spadola (2017, p. 100), will be difficult to adapt.

Furthermore, conducting future research employing Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit), which “aims to create new knowledge rooted in intersectional

commitments, seeks to understand how interlocking oppressions of racism and ableism work in tandem, and pushes the boundaries of intersectionality” (Annamma et al, 2018, p. 63) seems crucial to harness existing knowledge from CRT, Disability Studies and Intersectionality. DisCrit’s intention to better understand interdependencies of racism and ableism and how those affect all people (ib., p. 63) seems well suited for investigations around accessibility of spaces and settings for diverse populations.

8. Conclusion

In this literature review set-up it was to be expected that it would not be possible to deliver a concise to-do list that, when fulfilled, yields a perfect inclusive yoga class setting. While it may be discouraging that inclusion measures are based on individual resources, neighbourhoods, target groups, etc., it can also be considered a blessing in disguise. Inclusion must be based on the lifeworld of the people to be included; hence, there cannot be a one-size-fits-all solution. Subsequently, the wide variety of yoga styles and approaches may also be viewed as a merit since it provides different opportunities to choose a style for a specific setting.

As elaborated in the yoga for PoC and PwD literature reviews, political discussions may replace teachings about (pure) yoga tradition and/or wisdom, and classical ideas of alignment need to be adjusted when the bodies of the people practising are anatomically unique, respectively. It also seems salient that the role and expertise of the facilitator are key; hence, future research may be dedicated to yoga teacher trainings and how to enhance knowledge regarding inclusion.

In addition, it appears crucial to continue examining additional and/or refined intersectional groups and their needs, striving for a better understanding of singular and overlapping in- and exclusion criteria. Furthermore, it seems advantageous to employ yoga settings in Social Work, if the needs and issues of the target group have been defined, in order to design sustainable schemes that respect the lifeworld and vulnerabilities of diverse students.

However, further investigations are crucial since the current body of literature indicates a gap in research regarding marginalised groups and yoga

participation. Such research would likely benefit from interdisciplinary collaboration and ideally lead to guidelines following an intersectional approach, which could be employed in Social Work, clinical and everyday settings to render yoga classes more attractive and accessible to diverse students.

9. Literature and register of illustrations

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Illustrations featured

Illustration 1: Moran Hajo, C. (2021). Hull-House hosted a reception for the delegates of the Naacp meeting in Chicago on April 30, 1912 [Photograph]. Retrieved from: <https://janeaddams.ramapo.edu/2021/07/segregation-at-hull-house-a-closer-look/>.

Illustration 2: Eurostat, n.a. (2022). Share of people aged 16 years or over at risk of poverty or social exclusion by level of activity limitation, 2021 (%) [Graphic]. Retrieved from <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/DDN-20221214-2>.

Illustration 3: Regan, E. W., Wende, M., Blake, C., Fritz S. (2022). Conceptual framework [Graphic, p. 4]. Retrieved from: DOI: 10.1080/09593985.2020.1765438

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