

Promoting Wellbeing and Interculturalism at UBC Vancouver & UBC Okanagan

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University of British Columbia

KIN 465

November 22, 2014

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Through Virtual Yoga

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Introduction/Proposal

UBC's virtual Yoga drop in at both the UBC Vancouver & UBC Okanogan campuses intends to bring together culturally diverse individuals through physical activity and promote overall well being. In doing so, our project will focus on Hatha Yoga as the primary activity because bringing together culturally diverse individuals through physical activity is best achieved when the activity is not intimidating, and one where participants will feel efficacious and capable (Gasparini et al. 2010). The main purpose of this project will be for student from both campuses to be encouraged to communicate with one another, and learn from each other. The atmosphere will be inclusive to everyone regardless of culture, socio-economic status, sex, religion, and age.

The project proposal will be focused on a one-day activity that will take place at the same time and day at both the UBC Vancouver and UBC Okanogan Campus. Moreover, our project will raise cultural awareness and knowledge about the two campuses and will integrate cultural knowledge in a safe and active environment.

Goals/Mission

The main goal in this project is to create cultural inclusiveness and over all wellbeing between the UBC Vancouver campus and the UBC Okanogan campuses. Moreover, our project will raise cultural awareness and knowledge about the two campuses and will integrate cultural knowledge in a safe and active environment.

Challenges/Opportunities

- The geographic location of the campuses
- Creating an activity that will be attractive to students
- Time management (midterms, exams)
- Travel
- Cost
- Advertising

Methods

A survey has been conducted at each UBC campus to better understand the interest student have towards Yoga. Our group has interviewed 40 students at each campus and have concluded that the majority are interested in Hatha Yoga and the time preference for students is the beginning of the year during frosh week.

The virtual aspect of this proposal is a way of connecting the students between campuses. Large projectors will be present at each campus for students to visually see each other. Virtual yoga will promote cultural inclusion as students learn from each other's techniques and poses guided by hatha yoga instructors.

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The Need/Issue

The issue is the lack of cultural awareness around each campus. As we interviewed the 40 students at each campus, we came to a conclusion that there is a major lack of cultural awareness across campuses.

Stats have also found visible differences in terms of the demographic makeup of each campus. According to UBC facts and figures, 2014:

- 19% of UBC Vancouver students are international Vs. 9.6% at UBC Okanagan
- 50,000 Student at UBC Vancouver Vs. 8,388 at UBC Okanagan

Hatha Yoga Drop In Class

Event Date: During frosh week, Mid-Week On Wednesday September 9, 2015.

Start Time: 3:00pm – 5:00 pm

Timing

Frosh week is a time of the year where students are looking to get involved and are curious about how they can get involved. Most students are present on campus and are organizing their course schedules and timetables for the semester. This is a perfect time of the year for students to start of the semester and take advantage of the benefits of this event. Students will also be more motivated to partake in the activity since they will not be stressed with midterms, projects, and exams.

Event Location

- UBC Vancouver: Grass Field on Main Mall & University BLVD. OR Warm Memorial Gym (Plan B).
- UBC Okanagan: UBC Okanagan Gymnasium

*Please refer to www.maps.ubc.ca/ for a campus map

Who Can Come?

This event is targeted specifically towards University Students at both UBC campuses. Our target is mostly 1st year students who are new to both Campus's. They can benefit from getting involved early and having the opportunity to be engaged.

Any student can benefit from dropping into this event.

This event will be organized by 4th year Kinesiology students at UBC.

What type of Yoga?

Hatha Yoga: slow paced classes - which is ideal for beginners, but all levels can benefit from a Hatha session. There will be a lot of breath work, introduction to a variety of poses - slow and gentle movements. Hatha yoga can also help you wind down in the evening after a long day of work, which can be beneficial for students who at times experience long and stressful days.

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Marketing

We are going to market this event by setting up a booth during frosh week. We will be handing out mini flyers with the event information including time, location, and a brief overview of the event. Flyers are another way we will be promoting this event. We will be posting flyers around the student union building and the bookstore. We will also be targeting the on-campus residence as well.

Rational

Integration of culturally diverse individuals can be achieved through sport for ethnic minorities and immigrant communities in particular (Gasparini et al., 2010).

One of the main goals of yoga is to achieve tranquility of the mind and create a sense of well-being which is why we chose that specific activity (Woodyard, 2011).

Yoga & Cultural Inclusion

To create an ethic of inclusion in Yoga communities, we must consider the many ways in which people experience Hatha Yoga, especially the experiences of individuals who come from cultural backgrounds other than our own. Because it is difficult to see the ways in which cultures—our own and those of others—are seen, experienced, and responded to, it is easy to imagine that the reason that Yoga classes tend to be homogeneous is based on some inherent natural truth at work. To create space for diverse cultures in Yoga communities, we must recognize that (1) both teachers and students bring knowledge and culture with them to the relationship, and that (2) teachers (and institutions) should be held accountable to their perspectives, biases, and opinions about their own and others' cultural backgrounds. To create a diverse community, there must be an understanding of the human-ness of both the teacher and student, and of the inherent relationship that influences the learning process (Childress, 2008). Therefore, “since yoga is about engagement and connection, the yoga of inclusion asks us to go beyond our capacity to endure or put up with difference “(parker, 2012). This activity challenges and encourages participants to form relationships with others and at times step outside of their comfort zone.

Instructor

This event will have a leader who is a certified Hatha Yoga Instructor. The instructor will carry a microphone to be able to communicate well with the participants and will be teaching the poses to the participants. Keep in mind, each Campus needs to have a Volunteer Hatha Yoga Leader.

Dress Code

This event does not have a dress code. Participants have a freedom of choice in the way they want to dress. Although, we recommend that it may be more practical to carry out the poses if gym strip is worn. According to Halas 2011, “Girls were not comfortable with wearing their gym strip as they didn't like wearing shorts, therefore they preferred to just wear sweatpants. The teachers would then as a result deduct marks if the students didn't have their proper clothing and therefore students would begin to not participate,

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decreasing their amount of physical activity”. To prevent this from happening and to maintain everyone’s cultural safety and integrity, we will eliminate a dress code and people will have the opportunity to wear whatever they’re comfortable with.

Cost

An estimate of staff costs (instructor), facility cost (rental), and equipment costs (yoga mats, projector, speakers) are estimated to cost \$500.

Hatha yoga instructor- \$80/hr x 2 hrs = \$160/each campus

Facility Costs & Equipment- \$50/hr x 2hrs= \$100/each campus

Recommendations

We recommend for the event to take place in the first two weeks of the school calendar year. The main reason for this is a general interest for students to actively get involved in school events during the first week period. This especially is a great opportunity for 1st year students to meet new people, and get to know their campus. We also recommend for this activity to be well promoted through social media and flyers around campus in advanced to maximize participation. There is more research needed on, a) how physically activity (hatha yoga) promotes interculturalism and statistical facts on the cultural differences of each campus. We also recommend volunteer involvement to decrease the cost of the event.

Supporting Research

- ❖ Below is a list of supporting research that has supported our proposal. The research speaks to the benefits of physical activity, the benefits of yoga and how it promotes interculturalism and the benefits of cultural inclusion.

There have been numerous academic studies, which have researched the effects yoga can have on both the human body and mind. A study by Catherine Woodyard at the University of Mississippi outlines the numerous positive health benefits associated with regular hatha yoga practice. The physical health benefits corresponding to yoga vary greatly; from improved flexibility, to increased musculoskeletal strength, improved posture, increased vital capacity and even decreased risk of injury. However, yoga practice can be beneficial to much more than just physical health.

Woodyard also writes about the many psychological benefits, which can arise from regular yoga practice. Increased relaxation is commonly associated with yoga, along with increased self-esteem, improved quality of sleep, and can even be used to help relieve

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symptoms of depression and anxiety. Woodyard also discusses the wide range of benefits yoga can have on the human nervous and immune systems.

The relaxation techniques used in yoga practice have been shown to help the body shift from the sympathetic nervous system into the parasympathetic system, with the latter being associated with decreased blood pressure, increased blood flow to the vital organs, and decreased cortisol levels. This shift into the parasympathetic nervous system also allows for inhibition of the sympathetic area of the hypothalamus; which allows for a decreased response to fear and aggression. This inhibition often results in decreased anxiety, heart rate, respiratory rate and blood pressure.

In addition to helping shift the body into a more calming, parasympathetic state, yoga has been shown to increase serotonin levels, a mood boosting neurotransmitter associated with the relief of depression. According to Woodyard, numerous studies have shown yoga to be a beneficial in the treatment of depression and anxiety. While those suffering from major depression may require a variety of treatments for depression, such as anti-depressant medications, yoga can still be a beneficial supplemental form of treatment for mild to major depression.

Yoga practice is also known to increase blood flow, resulting in better transportation of hemoglobin and red blood cells, allowing for increased oxygen delivery to vital organs, such as the heart and brain. As disrupted blood transport is a major cause of heart attack and stroke, the increased blood flow that yoga allows for can help decrease the risk of heart disease, one of the leading causes of death in North America.

Research has supported the benefits of physical activity and cultural inclusion

- Integration of culturally diverse individuals can be achieved through sport for ethnic minorities and immigrant communities in particular (Gasparini et al. 2010).
- “sport is a human activity resting on fundamental social, educational and cultural values. It is a factor making for integration, involvement in social life, tolerance, acceptance of differences and playing by the rules.” (Gasparini et al. 2010).
- Bringing together culturally diverse individuals through physical activity is best achieved when the activity is not intimidating, and one where participants will feel efficacious and capable (Gasparini et al. 2010)
- Blending of cultures through sport promotes intercultural dialogue, whereby different people are encouraged to communicate with one another, and learn from one another. Intercultural dialogue is a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different cultural backgrounds. Among its aims are to develop a deeper understanding of diverse world views, and foster equity (Gasparini et al. 2010).
 - Cultural diversity in sport is beneficial to all who are involved (Gasparini et al. 2010).
 - Sociologists have concluded that the more a migrant belongs to the disadvantaged social classes, the more marked is the integration shortfall, linked with remoteness from the dominant culture (Gasparini et al. 2010)

- Sports clubs have unquestionably formed a vital link in the chain as often intercultural in encounter, catalyzing its members to share values and customs and cement relations of complicity, solidarity or friendship (Gasparini et al. 2010).
- The ideal image of sport as a promotional tool for integration or a sport that “speaks all languages.” (Gasparini et al. 2010)
- Intercultural learning and enjoyment is most useful in an informal setting (Gasparini et al. 2010).
- InterACTIVE in the Renfrew Collingwood neighborhood promotes intercultural understanding using physical activity as the tool, and aims to build intercultural capacity both in the community and at the university. The activity used at the Neighborhood house was Zumba; an action that was deemed fairly culturally neutral, by incorporating dance and aerobic fitness (Frisby, 2014).
- In Canada, all federal government units are required to follow the Multiculturalism Act, whereby Canada opts to recognize and respect its society which includes diverse languages, customs, and religions. There is little evidence that this is occurring at the local, provincial or federal levels in elite or recreational sport (Frisby, 2014).
- The dominant practice has been to assimilate newcomers into activities that are commonly taught in Canadian schools, recreation centres and other spaces. This practice contradicts multiculturalism policy, stifles learning about activities participated in around the globe and hinders the diversification of the country’s physical culture (Donnelly et al. 2006).
- Many policy-makers and practitioners agree with sport’s restorative benefits as a torrent of influential sources support this consensus, in addition to national and international governing organizations of sport and the United Nations’ support to the view that sport contributes to the development of social capital and social integration (Spracklen et al. 2014)
- Social capital: benefit from interaction of peoples. You cannot have this unless you have social network provided by leisure. To build social capital means that we transcend our social and political and professional identities to connect with people unlike ourselves. This is why team sports or group leisure activities provide good venues for social-capital creation (Spracklen et al. 2014)
- Sporting and cultural opportunities can play an important part in re-engaging disaffected sections of the community, building shared social capital and grass roots leadership through improved cross-cultural interaction (Denham, 2001).
- Spracklen et al. (2014) Conducted a study in Leeds. The report examined the leisure experience of immigrants: our respondents in the new migrant communities had rich and meaningful leisure lives, and found that **providing** they had the time and money to participate in communicative leisure. These experiences gave them a sense of identity, community and belonging. Many without resources, however, often feel restricted in what leisure opportunities are available. Individuals of low socioeconomic

status feel constrained in their social recreation opportunities. Unfortunately, the implication of this is that no amount of social capital can replace the economic capital. Many are still excluded on the basis of class. Economic status trumps everything, making it a determinant that we must still try to work past.

- Donnelly and Nakamura (2006) identified four different models that further illustrated the different roles that sport organizations can adopt when developing sport programs for immigrants: the assimilation model, the multicultural model, the barriers model, and the dynamic model (We are trying to support the dynamic model)
- Social inclusion is promoted by engaging in practices that reduce barriers, leverage resources responsibly, and are underpinned by an ethic of care (Ponic et al. 2010) .
- One-off projects (which is what we are doing) with short-term or one-time funding can be viewed as token efforts as opposed to sustainable organizational commitments that promote meaningful intercultural exchanges (Allison and Hibbler, 2004) GIVE FOLLOW UP
- Access involves more than just making it an available and inclusive atmosphere. Identification of barriers (Forde et al. 2014)
- Considerations for achieving inclusion on the organizational/managerial level: Management, constraints, management opportunities, funding, tackling challenges to promote integration and equity for all peoples (Forde et al. 2014).

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