

CCGL9064 Final Blog Portfolio

Chosen Body Practice

My chosen body practice is doing stretching and yoga 3 times a week. I will be conducting this body practice in my room. My planned schedule is to stretch and do yoga either after I wake up or before I go to bed, depending on my body condition that day. For guidance, I will be following tutorial videos on Youtube, including those from Pamela Reif, Madfit or Emi Wong.

Rationale

The reason I choose this body practice is I feel like I should take up an exercise routine. After graduating from secondary school, there is no longer Physical Education lesson that provides a weekly opportunity to exercise. In addition to this, my schedule in university has become more hectic and I was too lazy to get outdoor to exercise. As a result, I got physically weaker for the past year. I easily get tired or feel out of breath when I walk. Occasional physical activity like hiking with friends has become a burden. Also, I feel more stressed and pressured.

I understand that yoga is a relaxing body practice that brightens our mood and brings positive energy, which improves stress management and sleeping quality. Moreover, stretching increases blood flow and strengthens my muscle, which in turn improves my strength and benefits my hearth health. Since this body practice can be practiced indoor and can be adjusted according to my schedule, I believe I can easily follow my plan. Moreover, there are various tutorial videos online so I can choose the one that suits me the most.

I hope integrating this new body practice in my life will benefit me both physically and mentally. This blog will help me observe how this new practice affects my body and the ones around me.



After doing yoga for around 2 weeks, I have felt slight changes on my body, including being more flexible, having a better stamina and feeling more relaxed. I especially find the morning stretching session enjoyable since it is refreshing to start a new day with some exercise and it gives me energy to go through the hectic day.

(Please double tap and play the following video with audio)



Confidence in Body

At first, I was embarrassed at some friends joking about whether I was trying to stay fit, but eventually I started to gain confidence since I believe doing yoga is a healthy practice that I should not be ashamed of. Therefore, I experienced a change in my attitude towards this practice and started to share my experience with others.



Sexuality, Gender Stereotype and Sexual Orientation

During my routine of doing yoga, I was inspired by the concept of sexuality. When I talked about my routine with other friends, most of them are very supportive and easily accepts it. But

when we talked about men doing yoga, most of them think it is an unusual and feminine exercise for men. They think that men are supposed to choose more 'sporty' exercises such as football or rugby (Iskra 2021: Lecture 3, September 15)

(Please double tap to play audio)



They think that men are supposed to choose more 'sporty' exercises such as football or rugby. I start to understand why people say gender expression is a personal choice but society is setting prejudice and preferences to it. Female masculinity, male femininity or gender-neutral are all ways that people can adopt to express oneself. This also relates to the misunderstanding that non-normative gender expressions are the same as non-normative sexuality. For example, when I talked about how men can also do yoga and there are many male yoga instructors who have got professional certificates in Hong Kong, my friends said 'those men must be gay' This misinterpretation between gender expression and sexual orientation is one that many people have.

In fact, even though yoga may be interpreted as a feminine behaviour, it should not be linked to homosexuality. As in the case of 'Flower boys', which refers to 'someone who still retains his physical masculine appeal and characteristics despite his pretty appearance'. Such ambiguity differentiates from the

traditional definition of 'gay' in the West. It is inappropriate to assume that men must be macho, tough guys, not to mention classifying sports into feminine- or masculine-suitable. (Oh 2015:64)

Enhancing Bodies and Social Class

On the other hand, I was also inspired by the concept of enhancing bodies. People are in constant pursuit of self-monitoring and self-disciplining 'docile bodies' sensitive to any departure from social norms so we are habituated to self-improvement and self-transformation in the service of those norms. (Bordo 1993: 186) Women, in particular, feel the need to be thin and physically attractive than men. I believe this may be a more significant reason for people to do yoga, instead of health concerns.

In fact, yoga may even be connected to the concept of social class since it is common for middle class ladies to take part in this exercise. People believe yoga is more than an exercise, but a chic lifestyle choice of tasteful metropolis. I started to

realise how a simple preference of exercise can be connected to the bigger concept of embodying high class.

Referring to Pierre Bourdieu, expressions of taste are expressions of social power or powerlessness that can unify or separate people (Iskra 2021: Lecture 4, September 29). I believe people think when they have good taste, it means they are of high culture and they would like to embody themselves in this way.

Tracking

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During this week's routine of doing yoga, I decided to start tracking my body's transformation and changes by using the app 'Health' in my Iphone. I was inspired by the concept of 'tracking bodies'. These days, there are various apps that use self-tracking technology. By imputing data, we are able to self-regulate and manage ourselves. This trend is related to the concept of 'self-quantification' by Sanctorius. We try to know more about our body through numbers, with a goal to improve physical, psychological and mental health.

From my own experience, when I saw my data showing improvement in different health aspects, such as sleep pattern,

respiratory or mindfulness, I feel a sense of satisfaction and it gives me motivation to continue my routine. I am able to have better introspection, so as to better arrive at realizations about who I am and how I might change (Schüll 2016:197). However, when I notice my data worsening, I begin to panic since I fear my effort is not paying off. I also lose interest in continuing the routine.

My experience shows that self-tracking technology is actually a double-edged sword. Since our emotion will be largely affected by the data recorded and shown, we may experience ups and downs that may be either beneficial or detrimental to our body practice. Thus, we should carefully consider the probability of becoming too attached to and reliant on these technology.

Quoted from Paul Ford, 'In the pursuit of optimising my life, I ended up becoming a prisoner and hating my life' I believe my aim in starting a new body practice is positive, but self-quantification makes me over-focused on the outcome instead of enjoying the process (Song 2021: Lecture 2, September 8)

(1003 words)

Reference List

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