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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

KALEIDOSCOPIK KATAS: AN INTERCULTURAL SOMATIC  
CURRICULUM FOR HOLISTIC HEALTH

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirement for the Degree  
of Master of Arts

Emily Seymour

College of Visual and Performing Arts  
School of Theater Arts and Dance  
Dance Education

December 2021

This Thesis by: Emily Seymour

Entitled: *Kaleidoscopic Katas: An Intercultural Somatic Curriculum for Holistic Health*

has been approved as meeting the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts  
in the College of Performing and Visual Arts, School of Theatre Arts and Dance,  
Program of Dance Education

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## ABSTRACT

Seymour, Emily. *Kaleidoscopic Katas: An Intercultural Somatic Curriculum for Holistic Health*. Unpublished Master of Arts thesis, University of Northern Colorado, 2021.

The intent of this research study was to combine three African and Eastern somatic movement practices into a modern dance curriculum. Few studies have investigated the therapeutic value of subtle body awareness in a dance class context. This integrative study combined psychological, physiological, and contemplative pedagogical approaches, which led to the development of a comprehensive five-part workshop with five adult participants. This ten-hour online class series involved learning a traditional Afro-Haitian serpent dance called the Yanvalou, the Tantric practice of Chakra Yoga, and the Five Animals qigong. The original curricular goal was to combine these three modalities into five sequential *katas*. Due to numerous COVID-related setbacks, the researcher modified the curriculum and examined the relationships within this trinity of movement forms. The following qualitative instruments were used in this multimethod research study: reflective journal entries, participant commentary, a post-study rubric, video documentation, and the researcher's observations. Pre- and post-surveys were used for quantitative data collection and were cross-referenced for the purpose of identifying emergent themes. The combined result of this data provided evidence of holistic health enhancement, personal empowerment, and altered states of consciousness. This study advanced the somatic application of the Yanvalou by exploring its relationship to the chakras and qigong meditation techniques. It also informed the continued development of a contemplative curriculum that could be utilized by post-secondary institutions.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of:

Charles and Donna Seymour

Arthur Hall, Nataraja Kallio, and Dr. Avi Ginsberg

Christy O'Connell-Black and Dr. Sandra Minton

The *Kaleidoscopic Katas* research participants

The amazing thesis marathon support team

Melissa Becker and Chris Roberts

Sunny Rivers

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Goal of Thesis**

In the Tantric tradition, the art of fusion is perceived as the alchemical process of weaving various elements together. As a bee collects pollen from many flowers to create honey, the resulting integration of Tantric fusion holds greater value than its respective parts. In our modern-day era, advancements in technology and transportation have made it possible for people to study a diverse array of global movement styles. This evolutionary time in history offers a wealth of learning opportunities, which can inspire deep curiosity as well as a desire to impart such pearls of wisdom in new and innovative ways. With this honor comes a moral responsibility to maintain clarity of intent, authenticity, and respect for movement lineages. To aid in developing an insightful appreciation, cross-referencing these traditions with other movement practices enhances learning comprehension and appreciation. International somatic educator Martha Eddy spoke to the necessity of this step in global movement studies: “As students now more often have the privilege of studying dance, martial arts and other movement practices from teachers around the world it becomes more important to understand connections between them” (*Somatic Practices* 47).

Since the inception of modern dance, the investigation of intercultural connections has been integral to its development, and a key influence in this evolutionary process can be traced through the inclusion of somatic practices. The essence of somatic practices is “founded on an underlying belief in the wisdom of the body – they just use different approaches to access that

wisdom” (Lobel and Brodie 85). Somatic practices provide a wealth of movement resources from various cultural styles and techniques. According to Eddy, within this vast array of global contributions, both African and Eastern traditions have played a vital role in the evolution of somatic education. While a part of the historical development of the field of “somatics” involved choices to acquire a type of meta-view; a view that stands back from distinct cultures and investigates the individual organism separate from any identity other than that of being human, the profound influences of Eastern and African movement concepts and practices have been seminal in the development of European and American somatic paradigms. (*Somatic Practices* 47)

Somatic practices are frequently incorporated in collegiate dance programs, as a means of enriching the standardized curriculum, and “given that within our dance programs we can't begin to represent even a fraction of the diverse, rich dance forms globally available, one strategy is to consider how somatic practice helps inform one's understanding of the body and of movement in general” (Musil 118). The skillful addition of somatic material provides ample resources for providing students with a well-rounded, holistic experience of dance education.

The goal of this thesis was to advance the modern dance tradition of experimental inquiry via intercultural movement connections. This study was designed with the intention of developing a curriculum that could be utilized by collegiate dance and holistic health programs. This integrated somatic dance curriculum was developed with the intention of increasing health, personal empowerment, and altered states of consciousness. A combination of lived experience, interest in the sacred geometry of the body, and curiosity about the potential of longevity cultivation through spinal health practices have all served as vital inspiration for this project. Over the past twenty years, the researcher has integrated this trio of somatic movement styles

into her own personal practice, performance, and teaching experiences. She has gained an appreciation for the physical, psychological, anthropological, and subtle elements of each movement form. These direct, embodied experiences are the primary influence of this somatic fusion experiment. Dance ethnographer Angeline Young described the inherent knowledge that results from one's social foundation and self-reflective practice as 'lived experience.' "Most dance instructors are aware that one's lived experience in the body deeply informs the choices one makes as a dance teacher" (Young 13).

The experimental workshop designed for this study included the following multi-cultural somatic elements: a traditional Afro-Haitian serpent dance called the Yanvalou, the Tantric practice of Chakra Yoga that incorporates awareness of subtle body energy centers, and an ancient form of medical qigong known as the Five Animal Frolic. The original goal was to combine these three elements into five sequential katas for the purpose of enhancing wellness, feelings of empowerment, and an altered state of consciousness known as the flow experience.

Flow denotes the holistic sensation present when we act with total involvement. It is the kind of feeling after which one nostalgically says "that was fun" or "that was enjoyable." It is the state in which action follows upon action according to an internal logic, which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part (Csikszentmihalyi 136-137).

The following three essential questions were addressed in this study:

- Q1 What are the holistic benefits of an intercultural somatics dance class?
- Q2 How can an intercultural somatics course benefit undergraduate dance and holistic health programs?
- Q3 How does an intercultural somatics dance class facilitate the goal of contemplative education?

## **Purpose of Study**

The institutional purpose of this thesis was to expand upon pre-existing somatic research within dance education. The results of this study are intended to benefit dance educators who have an invested interest in the field of somatics. This research was conducted with the belief that developing a novel approach to somatic movement fusion would provide a unique contribution to the field of dance research.

For this project, a preliminary investigation was conducted to determine how each of the three movement practices contributed to the development of somatics. This was also part of an effort to examine how each element could potentially enhance the holistic health of adult students. Before completing the movement portion of the study, adult participants (ages 18-64) were surveyed about their previous experience with dance, yoga, martial arts, meditation, and other forms of somatics.

In addition to the pre-survey, other research methods included teacher observations, guided journal reflections, and a post study survey. At the end of the first four classes, students completed five minutes of silent meditation and ten minutes of reflective journaling. This contemplative methodology was selected due to its apparent congruence with the overall aim of the study: “Contemplative writing encourages students to engage with the process of writing, rather than focusing on the final product. Contemplative writing allows students to connect more deeply to course material, express those connections, and reflect upon their learning” (“Contemplative Pedagogy”).

The movement portion of the study involved a cross-cultural investigation of three philosophical approaches to spinal column activation. This integrative experiment combined the serpentine movement of the Afro-Haitian Yanvalou with the kundalini element of Tantra Yoga

and the internal art of energy cultivation within qigong. In this study, the researcher sought to investigate the connections between these respective movement traditions given all three involved altered states of consciousness through a holistic awareness of the central axis of the spine. Due to a series of complications and setbacks, the researcher chose to modify her teaching format and led an intercultural approach to learning the Five Animal series. The researcher's intention was to use this study as a preliminary step toward achieving her original goal of choreographing five unique katas. As explained by dance researcher Pablo Jimenez, kata is a Japanese word meaning "form, pattern, direction or prototype. Katas are precise, repetitive sequences of movements apprentices of a particular craft learn through systematic training" (133).

The purpose of this study was to develop a modern dance curriculum that could be utilized by higher education programs. The researcher's professional goal was to teach this subject matter at the college level, preferably within contemplative dance and/or holistic health divisions. This innovative study was intended to provide the researcher with preliminary materials that would lead to future development of a semester-long course proposal. This study was based on the understanding that an intercultural somatic education provides adult students with a well-rounded movement experience.

### **Significance of Study**

Throughout its development, modern dance has successfully integrated various movement traditions from all over the world. As dance critic and historian George Jackson stated in *Dance Magazine*, "As soon as someone crystallizes a technique, someone else tries fusing it with another. This has been the rule in modern dance since its beginnings" (par. 4). This study was an expression of the impetus that drives the evolution of alchemical movement forms.

Thanks to the influences of two key studies, a unique contribution to the field of modern dance emerged from this research.

The first source of inspiration relating to this study was Angeline Young's award-winning article, "Risk and ReORIENTations: An Asianist Approach to Teaching Afro-Haitian Dance." In her action research study, Young sought to explore "an intercultural teaching approach that applies a somatic teaching method integrating Chinese, Asian Indian, and Japanese somatic traditions" (13). The discovery of Young's pedagogy led the researcher to develop a similar curriculum design. Young's data population methodology, teacher-researcher observation methods, performance-based assessment, and reflective writing assignments provided an initial framework for *Kaleidoscopic Katas*.

In Young's approach to somatic education, she taught the Yanvalou by "...using two Asian philosophies of the body: (1) the concept of *qi* that derives from Chinese traditional medicine and *taiji* and *qi-gong* practice, and (2) the concept of *prana* and the chakra system derived from Ayurvedic medicine and yoga traditions" (17). The researcher took a different approach to combining these three elements. Each class began with a lecture that included a mind-body application of the chakra system and the medical qigong philosophy of the Five Animals. The movement portion of each class began with a qigong warm up and a sun salutation series for chakra activation. Next, standing yoga postures and martial arts exercises were introduced in preparation for the Five Animals study. This led to an integrated study of Lavinia William's version of the Yanvalou in a way that supported the respective elemental focus of each class. The final segment included learning the choreographed martial sequence for each Animal, followed by five minutes of standing qigong meditation.

The mind-body application of the chakra system is a process of understanding the characteristics and fluctuations of the seven major energy centers. Each of these centers corresponds with a physical region of the body. By cultivating an awareness of these dynamics, it becomes increasingly possible to address any imbalances or blockages through an array of techniques. In mirroring Young's study, select Hatha yoga postures, martial arts exercises, and Yanvalou techniques were employed so as to promote any beneficial experiences of chakra balancing and alignment. Whereas Young's study utilized the two Asian philosophies in her process of teaching the Yanvalou, this study cross-examined all three modalities within an intercultural approach to learning the Five Animals.

Qigong is based on a philosophy rooted in traditional Chinese medical theory and has its own perspective of the energetic body called the meridian system. Much like the yogic theory of the *pranic* body, the meridian system also correlates with the physical body. Creative product design professor Chungda Lee explains that "in order to be compatible with modern medical theories it is important to affiliate meridians qi with modern anatomy" (123). The holistic health application of qigong practice is threefold in nature as "Qigong consists of three modalities: mindfulness training, breathing manipulation, and body posture" (Lee 122).

*The Effects of Qigong on Reducing Stress, Anxiety and Enhancing Body-mind Wellbeing* by Yvonne Wai Yi Chow was another key influence on this study. Chow's aim was to "investigate whether a specific qigong exercise has a positive effect on reducing stress and anxiety, and enhancing body-mind well-being by using both psychological and physiological outcome measures" (50). Chow also sought to promote qigong as an effective and affordable therapy as "qigong therapy is not costly; it is easy for everyone to practice. It helps people to prevent illness, preserve health, and enhance longevity" (29).

The customized questionnaire Chow developed provided additional guidance for quantitative data collection procedures for this study. In her study “the subjects were requested to elaborate on their qigong experience and use 5-point scales to express their level of satisfaction” (Chow 52). Some of the *Kaleidoscopic Katas* post survey questions were modeled after the results of Chow’s study as the “most commonly reported bodily feelings included warmth, heat, numbness, swelling, and *qi*-flow inside the body. The feelings were more obvious in the dantian, abdomen, centre of palms, face and some said the whole body. The mental sentiments reported by the subjects included inner peacefulness, inner happiness, and feeling of *xing fu*” (182-183). The *Kaleidoscopic Katas* participants were asked to reflect on their physical and mental health and to report any awareness of *qi*-flow as previously reported in Chow’s study.

One significant discovery from Chow’s research was the five-thousand-year-old practice of qigong was originally called the ‘Great Dance.’ “This ancient style of qigong incorporated dancing and chanting into Chinese healing rituals for remedy and health preservation purposes” (Chow 29). For the purposes of this study, the researcher included a medical form of qigong called the Five Animal Frolic. This series was recommended for this project by the researcher’s martial arts teacher due to its dance-like qualities. “The practice of the frolic aids the elimination of diseases and increases the functioning of the limbs and joints” (Balaneskovic 129). Hua Tuo, a famous doctor of Chinese Medicine, developed the Five Animal Frolic during the Han Dynasty. The researcher chose to study the Wudang version of the Five Animals affiliated with Daoist gong fu. The Wudang Five Animals consists of five forms: Dragon, Tiger, Leopard, Snake, and Crane. This was determined to be an appropriate choice since the philosophies of the Yanvalou and Chakra system also included the snake archetype.



Like yoga, qigong has played an important role in the development of dance therapy. Professor of dance and movement therapy Emma Barton stated that over several decades, “martial arts, such as Tai Chi, Karate, and Qi-Gong, have been explored in both dance/movement therapy research and practice” (159). Martial arts have also had a profound impact of the evolution of somatics. Pioneers Irmgard Bartenieff and Moshe Feldenkrais were both “influenced by each innovator's direct practice of an Eastern martial art form. Bartenieff analyzed t'ai chi ch'uan and studied chi kung” (Eddy, *Somatic Practices* 51).

Somatics founder Thomas Hanna acknowledged the role martial arts and yoga had on the development of somatics but he chose to bypass the religious and cultural context of Eastern practices. While he supported the idea of promoting acceptance of Eastern movement forms, his stance was “the Asian martial arts and bodily disciplines of judo, aikido, t'ai chi, karate, yoga and tantra were predicated solidly on a somatic theory and not upon a religious pretense” (Eddy, *Somatic Practices* 48). This aspect of Hanna’s view of somatic theory “can be interpreted as aspiring to be purely of the mind and body. This view is devoid of social, relational, cultural, and emotional context or correlates” (Eddy, *Somatic Practices* 49). His approach also stripped these ancient practices of their philosophical foundation. For the purposes of this holistic health study, the researcher chose a more all-inclusive approach. This was part of an effort to provide data that would demonstrate the connection between theoretical comprehension and enhanced states of consciousness.

A similar debate ensued about the future of yoga as some instructors claimed a predominantly physical practice for the purpose of flexibility and stress relief was better suited to a larger audience. Others claimed that teaching yoga without the philosophical application was like making soup but never lighting the stove. The modern dance community shares a similar

appreciation about the importance of lineage and authenticity. “After thoroughly understanding the truths of the founder, teachers incorporate their own filters, adding personal insight to the founder’s message. If this homework is not done, only the shell of the style will be taught” (Lobel and Brodie 70). Katherine Dunham, a modern dance pioneer who incorporated the ceremonial dance steps of the Yanvalou into her choreography and technique, held an even more controversial perspective: “Always ahead of her time, Dunham attacked modern dance’s ‘freedom of movement’ style as a sham, noting that without purpose to dance, performers bring little but technique to the stage” (“Katherine Dunham” para. 10).

To effectively crystalize a new somatics-based modern dance technique, the researcher introduced this fusion form by discussing the philosophical contexts of the three traditions as well as her lineage and personal insight. This approach was consistent with Young’s aspiration to promote diversity through intercultural somatic education. “Intercultural education assumes a plurality of views and approaches to teaching and learning and uses the diversity of the human experience as a learning tool” (Young 14). *Kaleidoscopic Katas* also aligned with Young’s ability to incorporate the philosophical premises, which is a novel approach within the field of somatics. Using the lens of Chow’s quantitative methods to examine the holistic health benefits of a comparable movement trinity also demonstrated the significance of this study. Furthermore, *Kaleidoscopic Katas* involved documenting the participants’ experiences of qi and flow states to evaluate the spiritual dimension of their holistic health.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Somatic Practices in Dance**

The purpose of this study was to develop a novel approach to somatic movement fusion that would expand upon pre-existing research. Somatic practice is rooted in the belief that the intelligence of the body is interconnected with the mind. Professors Elin Lobel and Julie Brodie defined the essence of somatic practices as being “founded on an underlying belief in the wisdom of the body – they just use different approaches to access that wisdom” (85). In tracing the course of somatic history, its marriage with dance has played a vital role in its development. Since Thomas Hanna coined the term ‘somatics’ in the 1970s, dance has been a central part of the lived experience of numerous somatic pioneers. Many of these progenitors drew significant inspiration from their experiences as educators and performers. This trend continued well into the twenty-first century as over “a dozen more somatic disciplines were born from the exploration of dance and somatic education; numerous somatic founders began their professional lives as dancers” (Eddy, *A Brief History* 16).

While each trailblazer pursued their own unique journey of discovery and codification, their collective efforts served as a means for evolutionary growth. “On their own and with their students, each has taken bodily inquiry to new levels of human potential – as expressive physical performers and as fully engaged human beings” (Eddy, *A Brief History* 16). As multi-faceted as somatic practices have been, the universal language of dance has served as a common denominator for a wide array of approaches. The creative freedom somatic dance practitioners

enjoyed was contingent on the shared understanding that “there are many possibilities, no one truth, and always the option to make choices if one chooses to take responsibility for one’s body and living process” (Eddy, *A Brief History* 19).

### *Somatic Principle Integration*

Within the spectrum of somatic accomplishments, one particular goal that translates effectively to the dance classroom is a multi-disciplinary approach to enhancing students’ internal awareness. This shift from a traditional approach of focusing on an external source of guidance can also be described as contemplative reflection or self-listening. Dance professor Rebecca Enghauser theorized that “only through time spent ‘self-listening’ rather than just ‘other-imitating,’ can a dancer develop into an individual, well-rounded, performing artist” (37). This methodology is inherently supportive of the student’s holistic development, which provides them with a skill set that extends well beyond the classroom walls. As stated by Enghauser, “developing somatic acuity and intelligence that will serve the student both within and beyond the dance classroom is not only an appropriate mission for dance education, it is a vital one” (54).

In reflecting on these goals, it is evident a parallel exists between the individualized process of developing somatic systems and providing students a personalized approach to dance education. To make an effective transition between codification and application, it is worthwhile to examine the established systems of professional somatic educators. Elin Lobel and Julie Brodie devised a four-part model for dance educators who wished to integrate somatic principles in their classrooms. This model drew from the foundational principles inherent to the Alexander technique, body-mind centering, and Laban/Bartenieff movement analysis among other primary somatic practices. The four components of this interdisciplinary model are breath, sensing,

connectivity, and initiation. The successful implementation of these principles “can assist dance students at all levels and with diverse learning styles in fulfilling their movement potential” (Lobel and Brodie 80). Building from the framework of this well-researched somatic method provided an initial compass for any innovative efforts.

It is interesting to cross-reference Brodie and Lobel’s model with Enghauser’s system of developing “listening bodies” in a dance classroom setting. When presenting her method, she emphasized the importance of understanding the difference between incorporating principles and teaching codified somatic modalities. Enghauser’s strategy for effective infusion of somatic principles considered “the following five categories or components of somatic exploration, or body-listening, can be incorporated into a (most likely modern) dance technique class of any level: (1) spatial perceptual; (2) kinesthetic; (3) breath; (4) eco-somatic; (5) creative” (34).

In comparing Enghauser’s system with Brodie and Lobel’s model, both maintained the value of conscious breathing, focusing on the kinesthetic sense, and developing sensory awareness. When discussing integration strategies, Enghauser recommended incorporating conscious breathing techniques in a traditional warm-up exercise “for the purpose of gaining focus, bodily awareness, and energy activation” (36). She also defined a somatic approach to teaching sensory awareness as including “peer-, teacher-, and self-initiated tactile indications to help train the body to perceive the correct sensation or ‘feel’ of a movement” (35). Enghauser proposed that increased levels of perception could also be achieved through activation of the kinesthetic sense, which “allows the dancer to learn about and trust his or her own choices, evaluations, and perceptions when doing and learning movements” (35).

The empowering effects of these principles are intended to support the holistic development of well-rounded individuals. Both methods emphasize the importance of

continuously supporting each student when incorporating these principles in a technique class. “This individuality of experience should be encouraged and honored throughout the class, even when executing specific, choreographed material” (Lobel and Brodie 84-85).

The effective application of somatic principle integration can be used to enhance self-awareness and movement potential. A somatic approach to cultivating an enhanced state of body and mind might also contribute to a heightened experience of consciousness. In the poignant words of Martha Eddy, “The world of somatic education has secrets to living life more fully – keys to finding and knowing when we are ‘in the flow.’ Somatic awareness could be used for a step-by-step manual to document that entry into ‘the flow’” (*A Brief History* 23).

### *Global Influences*

Modern-day technology and advancements in transportation have provided an abundance of opportunities for cross-cultural dance explorations. Dance professor Pamela Musil maintained that “technology has made dance more broadly accessible, [thereby] increasing awareness of global dance trends and evolutions” (112). For the holistic movement aficionado, this is a bountiful time of continued growth and opportunity. But these evolutionary advancements also raise an important ethical question; in our modern era of widespread intercultural accessibility, in what ways can dance educators successfully integrate global influences into their classes?

This subject has become a lively topic of conversation and has sparked various perspectives on possible implications and outcomes. Throughout its development, modern dance has integrated and transformed various movement traditions. While some professionals have a positive view of continuing this tradition, others believe such innovations call for an examination of educational integrity. “Concerns have also been voiced about preserving cultural traditions and identities, given the homogenizing and westernizing impact globalization can have on

diverse communities” (Musil 112). One excellent way to enrich and enliven dance classes is through the incorporation of somatic practices. A skillful addition of somatic material could effectively provide students with a well-rounded learning experience.

Researching the historical underpinnings of somatic practices could assist with maintaining integrity and provide clues about how to approach the integrative process. Somatic pioneers Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen and Emilie Conrad each took different approaches to documenting their key influences. While Cohen took a multi-faceted approach, Conrad chose a singular path of retracing Katherine Dunham’s path to Haiti. “In her writings on Continuum and indigenous dance, she states that she physically internalized the influence of African culture during her years in Haiti (Eddy, *Somatic Practices* 56). In her process of somatic exploration and application, Cohen recognized the significance of the Yanvalou, which inspired her own biological movement developments. While Cohen emphasized the influence of an array of teachers from across the globe, Conrad drew inspiration from her own contemplative approach. Both methods played a vital role in the process of integrating dance and movement influences through lived experience.

### **Snake Dance: African and Eastern Connections**

The common thread that binds this trinity of somatic movement practices is the snake archetype. Throughout human history, snakes have played an essential role in many world religions and mythologies. Western-Judeo Christianity associates the snake with evil, sin and deception, based on the Biblical story of the Garden of Eden. Other cultures associate this mythological symbol with fertility, rebirth, healing, transformation, as well as creative life force. In traditional Chinese culture, the snake is viewed as a symbol of longevity. According to professor Anil Kakunje and others, many of these attributes can be linked to the snake’s

regenerative abilities, “as snakes shed their skin through sloughing, they are symbols of rebirth, transformation, immortality, and healing” (Kakunje et al. 63). The psychoactive effects of snake venom have also contributed to the association of this symbol with holistic health practices. “The snake’s venom is associated with the chemicals of plants and fungi that have the power to either heal, poison or provide expanded consciousness (and even the elixir of life and immortality) through divine intoxication” (Kakunje et al. 63-64). As a symbol of transformation in both African and Eastern traditions, the snake is associated with the psycho-spiritual state of trance or possession. These shifts of awareness are indicated by a person believing he or she has been overtaken “by a spirit, power, and deity or there is temporary altering of the state of consciousness” (Kakunje et al. 65).

### *Yanvalou*

The Yanvalou is a Haitian religious folk dance associated with the Rada rite of Vodou. The origins of this dance can be traced to the Fon people of Dahomey, West Africa where the word yanvalou means “come to me.” The word yanvalou is an incarnation of one’s innermost nature; it represents “a need to call for something deep inside [his or] herself” (Jimenez 99). The Yanvalou is a dance of supplication, which is represented by its signature spinal undulations that are performed in a forward-leaning bent knee stance. In Lavinia Williams’ version, the movement dynamics range from gentle and hypnotic to wild, spinning motions. In the context of Vodun ceremonies, the Yanvalou is performed for Haitian Lwa or deities. When practiced as an invocational prayer, the dancers might experience an altered state of consciousness or even lose consciousness altogether. In these ceremonies and rituals, “the dance is used to reinforce community and solidarity, as well as to induce a trance-like state in which the dancers may be possessed by these Lwa” (Pogue 733).



The serpentine undulations that travel the length of the spine are associated with Damballa, the snake Lwa. As the primordial creative spirit, Damballa is one of the most important Lwa of the Vodou pantheon. Traditionally, the Yanvalou is not used for entertainment purposes but rather serves as a communicative device between the physical and spiritual realms. “The purpose of the dance is practical and at the same time requires a close relationship between the dancer and his or her body; an impeccable inner awareness and deeply rooted spiritual conviction” (Jimenez 139).

The circular, wave-like motions of the spine are believed to have a therapeutic effect on the mind, body, and spirit. The Yanvalou prepares the body for more strenuous dances and is “said to result in a state of ecstasy that may release participants from emotional conflict and therefore place them in a state of total relaxation” (Pogue 733). Dancer and anthropologist Katherine Dunham gained an understanding of this phenomenon through her lived experience of dancing in Haiti. The Yanvalou was her favorite dance, through which she experienced a feeling of ecstasy and freedom. She described this state as feeling weightless, yet weighted; transparent, yet solid; sovereign, yet connected to the larger whole. “There is no tension, not the least rigidity of muscles, but a constant, circulatory flux which acts as a psycho-narcotic and catharsis of the nervous system” (Dunham 135).

### *Chakra Yoga*

The Sanskrit word chakra means “wheel” or “disk” and refers to spinning bioenergetic vortices located within the subtle body. The chakra system is an ancient Indian philosophical model that typically identifies seven major psychoenergetic centers. These centers are positioned along the central axis of the body in an ascending vertical column. The concept of chakras originated over four thousand years ago and appears in various ancient yogic texts. As explained

by American author Anodea Judith, “Chakras were referred to in the ancient literature of the Vedas, the later Upanishads, the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, and most thoroughly in the sixteenth century by an Indian yogi in a text called the *Sat-Chakra-Nirupana*” (5).

Traditionally, the subtle body has been employed in various yogic meditation practices for transformative and evolutionary purposes. In the words of yogic scholar and author Dr. Georg Feuerstein, “the ‘anatomy’ and ‘physiology’ of that supra-physical double – the so-called ‘astral body’ or ‘subtle body’ (*sûkshma-sharîra*)—was made the subject of intense yogic investigation particularly in the traditions of Hatha-Yoga and Tantra in general” (Feuerstein, *Yoga Tradition* 350). Chakras are composed of prana, or “life force energy,” which is condensed in the subtle body, or *pranamaya kosha*. The pranamaya kosha is one of five corresponding layers of individual existence called the *panchakosha*. *Pancha* means “five” and *kosha* means “sheath.” This five-part conceptualization is like layers of an onion or a set of Russian dolls. These five simultaneously existing layers or “bodies” encompass the full range of density from the most gross (the physical body) to the most subtle (the sheath of bliss; the transcendental Self). The pranic body serves as a medium between the body and mind, and to the clairvoyant, it “appears as a radiant, shimmering energy field that is in constant internal motion and is crisscrossed by luminous filaments or tendrils” (Feuerstein, *Tantra* 149).

Much like electricity, prana travels throughout the subtle body along pathways called *nadis*, meaning “rivers” or “conduit.” Yogic scriptures generally refer to 72,000 of these pathways of life force. Within this network of conduits, three nadis are of the greatest importance: *sushumna nadi*, the “pillar of light” that runs along the axial pathway of the spine; *ida nadi*, which represents the lunar, receptive, and feminine principle; and *pingala nadi*, which exemplifies the solar, active, masculine principle. Ida is positioned to the left side of sushumna

nadi and pingala sits to the right side. Ida and pingala form a double helix around sushumna nadi, and chakras are formed at the points where the three nadis intersect. “They meet at each of the six lower cakras and terminate at the center situated behind and between the eyebrows. Only the sushumna extends all the way from the bottom *cakra* to the crown center” (Feuerstein, *Yoga Tradition* 352).

Each chakra is a veritable pool of life force energy that has specific psychosomatic functions. “Based on their location in the body, the chakras have become associated with various states of consciousness, archetypal elements, and philosophical constructs” (Judith 6). The practice of Chakra Yoga utilizes an array of *asanas* (Hatha yoga postures) as well as breathing, chanting, and meditation techniques. Chakra Yoga employs both traditional and modern asanas to align the body and spine, which balances the flow of prana. A Tantric approach to Chakra Yoga might incorporate additional forms of holistic movement under the premise that bees collect nectar from various flowers to create honey. “By using techniques such as yoga, breathing, bioenergetics, physical exercises, meditation, and visualization, we can, in turn influence our chakras, our health, and our lives” (Judith 5).

A mindful approach to working with the chakras through the physical body is essential for cultivating a balanced flow of bioenergy in the central pathway. This is of central importance in Tantric philosophy, which associates the energetic current that travels along sushumna nadi with *kundalini-shakti*. Metaphysically speaking, this primordial serpent power is perceived as a sleeping goddess within the energy system. Tantric practitioners use breath and meditation to forcefully awaken this superconscious form of prana so it ascends the sushumna nadi and pierces all seven chakras. Once it reaches the practitioner’s highest energetic center, kundalini activates a temporary state of ecstasy or self-realization. “Once the kundalini power is unleashed in the

body, it produces far-reaching changes in one's physical and mental being. If properly managed, this incredible power can, as the adepts of Tantra and Hatha-Yoga promise us, refashion the body-mind into a 'divine' vehicle, a transubstantiated form capable of incredible feats" (Feuerstein, *Yoga Tradition* 353).

If prana is compared to electricity, then kundalini is like a high voltage current or the veritable triggering of a nuclear reaction. Therefore, it is imperative that kundalini awakenings be conducted within controlled conditions so the practitioner does not experience any disastrous side effects. "The symptoms of an unintentionally and wrongly aroused *kundalini* can be quite severe—from splitting headaches to psychotic episodes" (Feuerstein, *Yoga Tradition* 356). Katherine Dunham, who utilized metaphysics in her trainings, spoke to the dangers of an ill-equipped approach to working with the chakras. "The seven chakras, based on East Indian cosmology, that she incorporated into master classes during the last few years are particularly problematic for the inexperienced; if the instructor does not have complete control over them, Dunham repeatedly stresses, the consequences for students may be serious" (Aschenbrenner 210). In addition to working with an experienced teacher, a consistent Hatha Yoga practice is also recommended for facilitating balanced kundalini awakenings. Hatha Yoga strengthens the physical body, purifies the nadis, and balances the chakras.

### *Five Animals Qigong*

Qigong is a meditative exercise system based on Daoist philosophical principles. This self-healing practice is over 3,000 years old and includes postures, movement, breathwork, and visualization. The word qigong is a combination of the words qi or "life-energy" and gong, meaning "cultivation practices." The word qi is analogous to the yoga tradition's concept of prana, and the psychospiritual dimension of qi is an integral part of qigong. When approaching

this foundational aspect of philosophical and religious Daoism, clinical medicine professor George Chengxi Bao stated, “It is sometimes impossible to reject qi without also implicating the rejection of a larger body of spirituality, cosmology, and ethics often adopted by tai chi and qigong practitioners” (366).

There are three main categories of qigong therapies or exercises: “medical qigong, meditative qigong such as Daoism and Buddhism meditation and martial arts qigong such as Xing Yi, Tai Chi and Bagua Palm” (Lee 122). Qigong is comprised of longevity techniques for mental and physical health enhancement and restoration. Various methods and practices were used in ancient China “to alleviate pain, prevent diseases, increase vitality, improve well-being, contribute to longevity, or even produce enjoyment” (Balaneskovic 127). Some of these ancient techniques included Chinese therapeutic gymnastics called *Daoyin*. As explained by religious studies professor and author Livia Kohn, Daoyin exercises “have evolved and expanded over the centuries, are popular in China in their current forms of qigong (also chi kung) and taiji quan (also tai chi ch’üan), and have recently made inroads in Western health and spiritual circles” (1). Compared to qigong, taiji is a more elaborate form of movement meditation but is based on the same philosophical principles. Qigong methods involve the manipulation, circulation, and accumulation of qi through the subtle body channels, or meridians. The beneficial systems of qigong promote “the integrity of physical and mental well-being through the balancing of qi-blood and mechanical manipulation of meridian network on top of emotional regulation” (Lee 125)

Like yoga, both taiji and qigong emphasize the mind, body, and spirit connection, and are therefore classified as holistic health practices. Holistic health is a system of preventative care that emphasizes taking personal responsibility for one’s own well-being. Holistic health

considers any psychological, social, and environmental influences on a person's state of health. As a part of alternative healthcare, holistic practices enhance an individual's ability to function physically, mentally, and spiritually. In addition to their numerous physical and mental health benefits, qigong and taiji can also aid in the process of spiritual transcendence. "One must also consider that tai chi and qigong are often not just practiced for health purposes. They are also Daoist spiritual-religious practices through which practitioners, to varying degrees, try to harmonize with the universe's supreme principle, the Dao" (Bao 365).

In Daoist and Chinese philosophy, holistic health is perceived as the state of balance within oppositional forces. In traditional Chinese medicine, illness is often viewed as an imbalance or obstruction of qi which may be alleviated with qigong. "Through movement, breathing, and meditation, both tai chi and qigong aim to balance this flow of qi through the meridians to restore health" (Bao 364). According to the consensus of Western scientists, qi is viewed as pseudoscience since it cannot be tested through the method of modern physics. Despite Western science's inability to verify the existence of qi, medical research continues to reveal the many health benefits of qigong. In any case, the philosophical implication of qi is inherent to this ancient practice and may serve as a useful metaphor in spiritual pursuits. "Whether qi exists as energy or matter in the manner espoused by modern physics is irrelevant. It is real when the tai chi and qigong practitioner perceives it" (Bao 365).

A third century system of Daoyin calisthenics still practiced today is Hua Tuo's Five Animals Frolic. This form of medical qigong "was known and practiced as a set of healing exercises, encouraging perspiration, and enhancing the circulation of blood and qi" (Kohn 165). The Frolic mimics the movements and behaviors of the tiger, deer, bear, monkey and bird. Each of the five animals "tend to require only one type of movement, which is repeated seven times;

and most are done from a squatting position, with only the first part of the bird executed while standing” (Kohn 165). The goal of this system is to balance and enhance the circulation of qi and to target the energetic functioning of specific internal organs, all within the framework of traditional Chinese medicine. According to Serbian Qigong Association president Saša Balaneskovic, this therapeutic application also stems from ancient people observing the movements of animals and arriving at the conclusion “that some repeating movements enhance animals’ overall abilities and health” (128).

Tuo’s system can be traced to the animal imagery depicted in the *Daoyin Tu*, the earliest physical exercise chart (circa 168 BCE). Professor Kohn noted that “it is interesting to see that three of the famous five animals in the Five Animals Frolic, the bird, the bear, and the monkey, are already present in the manuscripts, indicating that the third-century physician Hua Tuo 華佗 did not create the forms but just developed a coherent system from already existing patterns” (40). The Frolic also incorporates the movements of ancient shamanic dances. “The animals also link exercise practices back to shaman medicine, which involved trance healing often aided by animals or effected by the shaman’s turning into an animal through an ecstatic dance” (Kohn 40).

As the Frolic grew in popularity, Daoyin exercises for longevity “were expanded in various new patterns, including seasonal systems, immortal practices, and formalized techniques of guiding the qi” (Kohn 163). In the late Ming and early Qing periods, healing exercises such as the stretch-and-bend sequence of the Frolic served as the foundation for martial arts practices including *tajii* and Shaolin gongfu. “The heavy reliance of these martial arts on Daoyin is obvious in their emphasis on deep abdominal breathing; their intense, focused movements; their rhythmic alternation of bends and stretches; and the fanciful names of their patterns, which are often associated with animals or supernatural figures” (Kohn 189).

The Five Animals Qigong taught at the Wudang Daoist Traditional Kung Fu Academy is an example of a martial evolution of the Frolic. The Wudang series is based on the movements of five different animals—dragon, tiger, leopard, snake, and crane—but has the shared purpose of improving health and longevity by targeting a specific internal organ. Performing each movement with correct alignment increases strength and flexibility. Attention to one’s breath is emphasized through the coordination of natural inhalations and exhalations while executing the series. Each of the five animals addresses an array of physiological, mental, and emotional health issues. “Together, these five postures are for the improvement and maintenance of a balanced and robust longevity. Specific animals correct and guide circulation in the body and promote flexibility and coordination, both externally as well as internally” (“Five Animals” para. 1).

### **Flow as an Altered State of Consciousness**

Positive psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi is best known for his theory of flow. He created this theory after observing how dancers and musicians could experience altered states of consciousness (ASC). Csikszentmihalyi compared these states with the experience of naturally and chemically induced ecstasy. He disregarded drug use, calling it an external manipulation of the nervous system, so “you don’t feel that you have achieved [the flow state], as you do when you get it through yogic techniques or true flow. If you achieve the ecstatic experience through meditation, you feel ‘I can do it’ – you are actively connected to a larger experience” (Evans, para. 13). In the flow state, a person becomes completely immersed in what they are doing to the point of losing their sense of time, fatigue, and discomfort. Csikszentmihalyi described the flow state as being “completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like



playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost" (Cherry, para. 5).

The parameters of the flow state begin when a person engages in a clear set of goals that provides them with a sense of purpose and direction. They must understand the process involves challenges that would require an appropriate and attainable level of expansion of their existing skills. They must also receive immediate feedback throughout the creative process so they can effectively gauge their progress. Under these conditions, this person's sense of time becomes a seamless moment-by-moment experience in a veritable merging of action and awareness. Their experience of intense, focused concentration is combined with feelings of freedom from egoic constraints. Rather than focusing on the reward of achieving their goals, the person feels as though the entire experience of the activity is inherently rewarding (Csikszentmihalyi 240).

### **Contemplative Education for the Undergraduate Student**

The goal of contemplative education is to cultivate deep learning through increased focus, awareness, and insight. Contemplative teaching methods encourage contemplation, introspection, and mindfulness. Religious studies professor Fran Grace outlined the methods that are incorporated in a wide range of classroom practices such as "silent sitting meditation, compassion practices, walking meditation, deep listening, mindfulness, yoga, calligraphy, chant, guided meditations, nature observation, self-inquiry, and many others" (Grace 99).

Contemplative practices are utilized for their ability to meet the needs of the modern-day student such as addressing the effects of a multi-task-oriented, multi-media culture. Such challenges could include "student distraction or anxiety, superficial learning, rigid thinking, inability to see how course material relates to students' daily lives, and students who are motivated by grades, rather than by learning" ("Contemplative Pedagogy" para 1).

Growing interest in contemplative studies at the institutional level is a direct result of a growing body of “research that shows the undeniable benefits of meditation on brain functioning, personal development, and human community” (Grace 112). These scientific findings demonstrated that contemplative methods and meditation enhanced brain function, psychological function, bodily health, and work performance. As a means of self-empowerment, contemplative studies provide students with tools for developing a foundation of intellectual and personal freedom through increased self-awareness. Certain contemplative practices are designed to hone a beneficent being and the benefits of this level of self-mastery serve the individual as well as their surrounding community. Scientific research suggests that “individuals’ inner coherence (mindfulness, inner peace, compassion) transmits a beneficent effect on the world at large on the non-linear level of consciousness itself” (Grace 116).

In circling back, the purpose of this study was to investigate the connections between a trinity of African and Eastern movement practices. These explorations have informed the continued development of an intercultural modern dance curriculum. These ancient practices have played a seminal role in the evolution of the somatic tradition so each movement modality was examined for its capacity to increase comprehension of the wisdom of the body. Furthermore, this investigation identified ways to utilize this innate knowledge for holistic health enhancement. In seeking to develop an integrated somatic system that can result in the flow state, the psychospiritual elements of these modalities were examined for their ability to create altered states of consciousness. The analysis of Csikszentmihalyi’s methodology informed the development of the data collection procedure, which provided an assessment strategy for determining the achievement of the flow state. These combined investigations were referenced with contemplative pedagogy, which was the teaching method of this innovative curriculum.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Research Context**

The intent of this study was to inform the development of an intercultural modern dance curriculum. The study was conducted on Zoom from the researcher's rural home using her personal laptop. The five-part workshop was held in the living room, which had been cleared of all furniture. The 15' x 17' private movement space was deemed to be suitable for this project due to its short, cropped carpeting, high ceiling, and moderate lighting. To prevent possible tech issues or interruptions, the high-speed internet service was amplified with an ethernet cable connection. The two-hour classes were held twice a week from 5-7pm MST beginning on July 27 and ending on August 13, 2021. A Zoom Pro account was purchased for the duration of the study, which made it possible to host and record the two-hour calls. A new sound system was also purchased for this study including a USB mixer, a wireless headset, and an iPad mini. A private Facebook group served as the primary means of coordination and communication.

#### **Institutional Review Board**

Prior to the launch of this study, the researcher requested approval from the University of Northern Colorado's Institutional Review Board (IRB). This process involved submitting all relevant materials, including the consent document, recruitment materials, pre and post survey, journal prompts, and post study rubric. In addition to these documents, she also presented a narrative that summarized the purpose, intended participants, methods and procedures, privacy

and confidentiality measures, any foreseeable risks, and projected costs of the study. Once approval was granted (see Appendix A), she began to conduct the recruitment process.

## **Research Instruments**

### *Recruitment Methods*

The participants were recruited via advertisements on the researcher's Facebook page, website, and e-newsletter. The seven people who expressed initial interest were invited to join a private Facebook group, where they received regular updates on this project. At the time of the launch, it was undetermined as to whether the study would be conducted in a physical location or on Zoom. The original format of the study was a weekend workshop that was designed to meet once on Friday evening and twice on Saturday and Sunday. This type of immersion was for the purpose of creating consistent attendance. This study was advertised as being for adults (ages 18-64) who felt comfortable participating in 90-minute low-impact classes for strength, flexibility, and balance. They were advised to bring athletic wear, a water bottle, a journal, and a writing utensil. Due to COVID-19, a series of setbacks prevented the researcher from coordinating an in-person workshop. Once it was determined the workshop would be held on Zoom for a nominal fee (\$30 or a \$25 Early Bird discount), the five people who were able to attend were surveyed about their scheduling requests and restrictions. Their availability led to the decision to switch the format from a weekend workshop to a bi-weekly class format.

### *Consent Form*

All five participants received a digital copy of the Human Participants in Research Adult Workshop consent form (see Appendix B). This document provided a general overview of the study and included a description of the background and purpose of the thesis. It also conveyed information about what could be expected, the inherent level of risk and discomfort, as well as

the participants' right to confidentiality and voluntary participation. All five participants returned this completed form to the researcher before registering for the workshop study. Hard copies of these documents were submitted to the University of Northern Colorado's Office of Dance Education.

### *Entrance Survey*

In the entrance survey, the five participants listed their age range and current level of education (see Appendix C). They were polled about their background in dance, yoga, martial arts, and meditation. They were also asked to list any formal certifications or degrees in dance education and if they had taught of any of the four modalities listed above. They documented any styles they might have received formal training in and for how long. Additionally, they listed any ways they had physically performed meditation practices. Last of all, they were asked to indicate if they had any previous experience with a sample list of somatic techniques.

### *Participant Journal Entries*

At the end of the first four classes, the five participants were led in a 10-minute contemplative writing exercise. They were asked to reflect on the following two questions: 1) What did you learn? and 2) What was challenging to you? These questions were modeled after the self-assessment journal prompts Angeline Young used in her action-research study, *Risk and ReORIENTations: An Asianist Approach to Teaching Afro-Haitian Dance*. One adjustment that was made to Young's approach was to modify her second question of "What did I risk?" To promote the flow state, these writing sessions were introduced as free-writing exercises. The participants were asked to write continuously throughout the duration of the exercise and were encouraged to abstain from worrying about grammar, spelling, or mechanics. Digital copies of these journal entries were collected at the end of each class or once the participant had completed

their home-study session. The researcher also participated in this writing exercise for documenting her observations after each class.

#### *Researcher Post Study Rubric*

The post study rubric was used in the final assessment stage of this study. This form was used to identify proficiency in three categories of holistic health: physical, mental/emotional, and subtle. At the completion of the final class, the participants were observed while they practiced the Wudang Five Animals series of five forms: Dragon, Tiger, Leopard, Snake and Crane. The researcher used this rubric to assess the participants current level of proficiency in the three categories on a scale that ranged from mastery to proficient to novice. In the physical category, attention was placed on energy levels, pain response, coordination, and range of motion. The mental/emotional category was used to identify observed attitudes, stress response levels, and any positive mental states, which were modeled after Yvonne Wai Yi Chow's method of identifying the qi state. The subtle category addressed the participants' level of connection and presence while meditating. The goal of this procedure was to assess their ability to perform the final standing meditation practice in an integrated, relaxed, and focused way.

#### *Exit Survey*

The exit survey asked the five participants to self-assess the state of their holistic health before, during, and after the workshop (see Appendix C). The three branches of holistic health were defined as physical, mental/emotional, and the experience of an altered state of consciousness (ASC). In the physical category, questions pertained to energy, pain, and flexibility levels. The participants also reported any feelings of warmth, tingling, numbness, or swelling they might have experienced during the workshop. This selection of physical sensations was modeled after Chow's method of measuring the qi state. The mental/emotional category

included questions about stress, anxiety, and depression levels. The participants also recorded any feelings of peacefulness, happiness, relief, or bliss as this list of mental states was also used in Chow's method of identifying the qi state. The questions in the ASC category were based on Csikszentmihalyi's parameters for the flow state. The participants were asked if they were able to accomplish their personal goal for the workshop. They also evaluated their level of difficulty in navigating day-to-day activities as well as their awareness of time. Finally, they rated their levels of enjoyment, comfort with learning new materials, and engagement during the workshop.

### **Research Participants**

The five participants in this study were contacts from the researcher's network of private clients and friends. Three of the participants had previously studied with the researcher through individual training sessions, small-group classes, and/or workshops. The participants had varying levels of experience in the three movement modalities. A few students had extensive experience in various styles and two of the participants were certified dance, yoga, and/or martial arts fitness instructors. The other students had prior adult training experience with one of the three movement modalities. A few of the participants were meditation practitioners with novice to intermediate skill levels. The group consisted of three Caucasian females and two males, one of whom was Caucasian and the other of Caucasian-Asian descent. At the time of the study, the participants listed their ages as being within a range of 26 to 64 years old. Their highest levels of education included high school diplomas or bachelor's degrees. The participants' time zones included Eastern, Mountain and Pacific times.

### **Limitations**

Three limitations affected the findings of this study. Attendance issues impacted the quantity of data that were collected. To accommodate the participants' varying time zones, work

schedules, and family commitments, a bi-weekly class schedule was chosen as the best option. Due to the wide range of time constraints, there was no single day or time in the proposed three-week period when all five people could meet. The chosen class times were based on when at least two people could attend with the understanding that recordings of each class would be available for personal use. If a participant missed a class, they were asked to use the recording as a learning resource and submit their journal entry before the next class.

Health issues factored into the attendance levels of this study. One of the participants was only able to observe the second half of the first class and did not attend any other classes due to family, technical, and health issues. Another participant attended the first class but had to discontinue with the study due to stress and illness. Both participants had access to the class recordings for the remainder of the study but only submitted journal entries for the first class. One of the participants attended part of the first class but due to physical limitations and work commitments, chose to complete the remainder of the workshop as a home-study course. Additional health-related issues included food poisoning, child sickness, and stress from the California fires.

Technical issues, such as coordinating the new USB sound system with Zoom, were a major obstacle in the launch of this study and contributed to a degree of confusion. This was the researcher's first attempt at hosting a Zoom workshop and she sought out as much guidance as possible in that limited timeframe. In the weeks leading up to the deadline of the completion of this project, it became clear a Zoom workshop was the only viable option. Once the participants confirmed their enrollment, the researcher purchased the necessary equipment and taught herself how to use the new USB sound system in the week before the workshop. While the initial tech issues were significant, they were completely resolved halfway through the series. The process



of learning the specifics of leading a Zoom workshop also posed an additional set of challenges but these were minor in comparison to the sound system issues.

### **Curriculum Design**

The creation of this curriculum began with analyzing the Colorado Academic Standards and the National Core Arts Standards. While this workshop was intended for adults, these K-12 resources were helpful in providing the researcher with a full scope of the art of dance education. In reflecting on her previous experience of working in K-12 settings, the researcher chose to reference the anchor standards for sixth grade students. She was able to draw numerous parallels between these standards and the goals of her research study. This exercise also inspired the researcher to consider developing a variation of this curriculum as an in-school residency program. The 2020 Colorado Academic Standards that were resourced for this workshop are listed in Table 1.

A selection of the 2014 National Core Arts Standards were used in conjunction with the Colorado Academic State standards. The guiding principles of this conceptual framework were chosen for their relevancy to the process of curricular development and implementation. These standards also aligned with the student learning objectives of the workshop. The components referenced for this study are listed in Table 2.

Table 1

## Colorado Academic Standards for Dance

Standard	Activity
Standard 1: Movement, Technique, and Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in the dance production process in multiple roles.</li> <li>• Perform dances with specific, given intents.</li> </ul>
Standard 2: Create, Compose, and Choreograph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply elements of dance in movement improvisation.</li> <li>• Improvise movement based on both existing knowledge and new discoveries.</li> </ul>
Standard 3: Historical and Cultural Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research, perform, identify, and differentiate the Language of Movement from various cultures and eras.</li> <li>• Identify the Language of Movement used in dances from various cultures and eras.</li> </ul>
Standard 4: Reflect, Connect, and Respond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze connections between all content areas, mass media, and careers. Compare the relationship of dance to other art forms, school subjects, and the community. (“Dance Academic Standards”)</li> </ul>

One of the primary goals of this project was to create a seamless integration of three diverse somatic movement forms. The overarching objective was to explore how an intercultural somatic approach could assist people with deepening their holistic understanding of themselves and the world they live in. While this goal aligned with the objectives of these standards, it also raised a question about the still-unknown participants’ ability to synthesize a diverse range of content. While the researcher assumed successful integration would be contingent on her ability to facilitate comprehension, she also determined that the participants’ previous experiences with any, all, or none of the three modalities would also factor into the results.

Table 2

## National Core Arts Standards excerpts

Standard	Activity
Creating: Explore Anchor Standard #1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.	DA: Cr1.1.6 b. Explore various movement vocabularies to express and transfer ideas into choreography.
Performing: Embody Anchor Standard #5: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for a presentation.	DA: Pr5.1.6 a. Embody technical dance skills (e.g., alignment, coordination, balance, core support, kinesthetic awareness, clarity of movement) to accurately execute changes of direction, levels, facings, pathways, elevations and landings, extensions of limbs, and movement transitions.
Responding: Analyze Anchor Standard #7: Perceive and analyze artistic work	DA: Re7.1.6 a. Describe or demonstrate recurring patterns of movement and their relationships in dance.
Connecting: Relate Anchor Standard #11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.	DA: Cn11.1.6 a. Interpret and show how the movement and qualities of a dance communicate its cultural historical, and/or community purpose or meaning

Source: "National Core Arts Standards" 1.

To address this unknown challenge, reflective journaling exercises were selected for the purpose of increasing awareness of the relationships between the three styles. This exercise would also inform the researcher about any potential biases that might emerge throughout the course of the study. It was proposed that by reflecting on the experience of embodying multi-cultural movement skills, the participants would succeed in identifying relationships between the three movement languages. To facilitate this analytic process, the researcher emphasized the commonality of the central axis of the spine in all three modalities when presenting their cultural context. Her lectures would also include comparisons of the three modalities and opportunities for shared discussion on these topics.

Another curricular goal was to teach the participants how to practice the five katas independently and in a circle. The practice of moving in a circle was chosen for its ability to facilitate a sense of connection and community in a dance class setting. Allocating time for small group work would allow the participants to refine their skills and provide feedback to one another. This exercise would provide the participants with an opportunity to practice for their final assessment, which was intended to be a non-competitive performance experience. One of the researcher's underlying ambitions for this project was to include opportunities for improvisation. She decided to include an improvisation exercise if time allowed at the end of the final class. While this workshop addressed many of the selected standardized learning objectives, this research study was categorized as a Level 1 foundational workshop. The researcher plans to design a Level 2 variation in the future, which would provide additional opportunities for student collaboration such as choreographic problem solving and dance improvisation.

After examining the standards excerpts, the researcher identified which student objectives, key vocabulary, and lecture topics would be included in the study. The researcher used this information to develop five original multi-media keynote presentations that included web-based images and online videos. Each lecture was approximately 15 minutes long and provided an in-depth overview of the three movement modalities. The first lecture also included explanations about the purpose of the study as well as information about the researcher's lineage. Each lecture featured one of five chakras, one of the Five Animals, and their associated elements and qualities. Open discussions on the holistic application of these modalities were included in the last two lectures. The topics and outlines of each class are listed in table 3.

Table 3

## Keynote presentations

Lecture	Activity
Lecture #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions, key vocabulary, overview and background of the study, researcher's lineage, movement forms, Dunham technique video, subtle anatomy, class overview.</li> <li>• Focus: Root Chakra and Dragon.</li> <li>• Student Objectives</li> </ul>
Lecture #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow up and review, snake archetype (Yanvalou, Kundalini, Snake).</li> <li>• Focus: Sacral Chakra and Tiger.</li> <li>• Student Objectives.</li> </ul>
Lecture #3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow up and review, Dantian, Magnus of Java video.</li> <li>• Focus: Solar Plexus and Leopard.</li> <li>• Student Objectives.</li> </ul>
Lecture #4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qigong and Chakra Yoga comparison study. Backbends discussion, video of B.K.S. Iyengar.</li> <li>• Focus: Heart Chakra and Snake.</li> <li>• Student Objectives</li> </ul>
Lecture #5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow up and review, final thoughts on the three movement modalities.</li> <li>• Focus: Throat Chakra and Crane.</li> <li>• Aether and Fire discussion.</li> <li>• Student Objectives and Exit Survey.</li> </ul>

*Class #1: Root Chakra and Dragon*

The first class introduced the structure and foundational exercises for the entire series. Each of the 90-minute classes began with a martial arts warmup that was inspired by Onye Ozuzu. This stationary sequence used qigong and taiji exercises such as pole standing, cloud hands, and the closing gesture. It also incorporated exercises for spinal flexion and extension, which prepared the body for practicing Chakra Yoga and the Yanvalou. A basic yogic breathing

technique for activating the parasympathetic nervous system was practiced throughout the warmup.

The second portion of the class featured a Hatha Yoga sequence for chakra activation. Sun Salutations are a series of a dozen yoga postures that warm up the entire body. This Hatha Yoga practice is used to create a symbiotic relationship with the sun so it is traditionally performed at sunrise or sunset. This sequence could be modified to suit various ability levels and physical restrictions and could be customized with additional poses for a variety of purposes. Breath is the guiding principle in this practice as each movement is directed by an inhalation or exhalation. In each class, the participants were led in three continuous rounds of Sun Salutations. Each unique sequence focused on a specific region of the body that corresponded with the featured chakra. In the first class, the theme of the root chakra was represented through postures that emphasized leg stability and the qualities of the earth element.

Next, the participants were led in a series of foundational standing postures including open hip Hatha Yoga poses and the martial Horse and Bow stances. In keeping with the class theme, the participants were instructed to hold these postures while maintaining an awareness of breath and form. These postures were selected for their applicability to the Five Animals practice, which was the focus of the third portion of the class. In introducing the Opening and Dragon sequences, special attention was placed on breath, form, and the corresponding element.

After a few rounds of practice with verbal and non-verbal instruction, accompanying recorded music was introduced. The music was selected for its relevance to the specific class theme. Before leading the participants in practicing to music, the researcher emphasized the importance of attending to the breath and staying fluid with the movements rather than focusing

on moving within a set number of counts. This instruction was given for the purpose of reducing any excess physical tension, enhancing the flow state, and increasing qi flow.

In the final portion of the first class, the participants received detailed instructions about how to practice the pole standing meditation. These directions reinforced the techniques that had been introduced earlier in the class. While this exercise was introduced as a silent practice, the researcher offered occasional reminders about form, breath, and attention throughout the practice. After the five-minute meditation, the participants completed the journaling exercise.

*Class #2: Sacral Chakra, Yanvalou, and Tiger*

The second class began with an experiential review of the martial arts warm-up, which was followed by a detailed study of the Yanvalou. The participants received an-depth explanation of how to execute the signature body roll for therapeutic purposes. This explanation included a comparison to the spinal flexion and extension technique that was used in the Sun Salutations. The initial introduction to the Yanvalou involved learning the traveling step with the accompanying fanning hand gesture. This exercise served as a warm-up for the Five Animal study of the Tiger, which involved a dynamic activation of the wrists and fingers.

After this introductory examination of the Yanvalou, the participants were led in a Sun Salutation series for second chakra activation. This sequence began with opening the hips in a wide-standing lunge sequence. The associated element is water so a fluid-like movement quality was emphasized throughout the process of opening the hip girdle. In building upon the Yanvalou study, spinal undulations were incorporated into hip-opening postures. After completing the Sun Salutations, the participants reviewed the foundational standing posture series. They also practiced some new variations that included the claw-like hand position of Tiger.

The Five Animals practice began with a review of the Opening and Dragon sequences. The concept of the *Dantian* energy center was introduced and the participants were advised to breathe into this center while relaxing their abdomens. After reviewing the sequence with music, the Tiger form was introduced. After a few rounds of led verbal instruction, the participants were asked if they had any questions. The researcher played a new musical selection that was relevant to the second chakra theme. After leading the Tiger sequence to music a few times, the researcher observed the participants' progress and offered constructive feedback. Next, the researcher led the participants in the combined Opening, Dragon, and Tiger sequences. Afterward, the researcher led a short discussion about the alchemical process of combining the water element with the contrasting metal element of the Tiger. The participants were invited to share their experiences about embodying these movement qualities and to reflect on their ability to integrate these concepts. The researcher shared a short story about her personal experience with the three modalities and the effects of spinal activation.

The meditation practice began with the researcher providing additional details about action and alignment in the standing posture. These instructions included components of the Yanvalou movement study and the concept of the Dantian. The participants were encouraged to stay relaxed and stretch their spines as needed to counteract any excess tension. The five-minute practice was conducted in silence with the recommendation that this exercise was an opportunity for resetting the body. After the meditation, the participants were given two writing prompts for the journaling exercise: 1) What did you learn? and 2) What was challenging to you?



*Class #3: Solar Plexus, Yanvalou,  
and Leopard*

The third class began by reviewing of the martial arts warm-up. In keeping with the theme of the third chakra, the cloud hands technique was used for creating somatic awareness of the Dantian center. The Sun Salutation sequence included postures that expanded upon this technique such as holding a high lunge with the hands framing the abdomen. The purpose of this exercise was to create an embodied sense of setting healthy boundaries from an activated energetic core center. The Chakra Yoga portion of the class concluded with stabilizing open hip standing postures. This provided the basis for practicing a short martial arts series of leg lifts for core strength and coordination.

In keeping with the class theme, the Yanvalou practice incorporated the fire element of the Solar Plexus. After reviewing the traveling step, the wild spinning break was introduced. This technique built upon the idea of connecting the movement of the hands with an awareness of an activated core center. In creating a whip-like spinal motion that emanates from the sacrum and is amplified by the core and arms, the body is essentially thrown into a series of rotating oscillations. The traditional intention of performing these rapid cycles of centrifugal force is to disrupt the practitioner's equilibrium and thereby induce an altered state of consciousness.

After demonstrating the sequence, the researcher led the participant in practicing the four cycles of the break. The researcher observed the participant's progress and offered constructive feedback. The next learning stage involved combining the traveling step with the break while practicing to music. Afterwards, the researcher asked the participant to share any thoughts about their process of learning the Yanvalou. The researcher provided additional information about the physical application and health benefits of this practice. She also explained how the process of generating heat in the body related to the Solar Plexus study.

Next, the researcher led an experiential review of the Five Animals sequence without music. Then she demonstrated the Leopard while the participant observed. After providing this initial explanation, the researcher led the participant in one round of the Leopard sequence. The researcher asked the participant if she preferred to be observed or to practice while following the researcher a second time. The participant chose to practice once on her own while the researcher provided verbal instructions. The researcher led a few rounds of the Five Animals during which she alternated between facing the camera and facing away from the camera.

After checking in with the participant about her progress, a new piece of music was introduced. The researcher led three rounds of the Five Animals with music. Since only one participant could attend this class, the researcher made an adjustment to the format of the final segment. After observing the participant's progress, the researcher chose to substitute the final standing meditation with an exercise for increasing awareness of qi flow in the arms. In this floating arm exercise, the muscle memory overrode the movement command from the brain, which simulated the feeling of qi. This was followed by a short discussion about creating an effortless quality of movement and the effect of "riding the breath." After inquiring about the participant's progress, the researcher led the reflective journaling exercise.

*Class #4: Heart Chakra, Yanvalou,  
and Snake*

The fourth class began with the martial arts warm-up and three rounds of Sun Salutations. New postures included preparatory back bends such as the hip-opening Swan pose and a high lunge variation for opening the thoracic spine. After practicing Dancer's pose for balance training, the participants were led in the wide-standing lunge sequence for increased hip and shoulder flexibility. Next, they reviewed the martial arts leg lifts series with the addition of a new

kickboxing variation. Afterward, the researcher explained that the purpose of these exercises was to provide base training for the upcoming Crane study.

The Yanvalou portion of the class began with an in-depth review of the circulatory motions of the spinal undulation technique. The participants were introduced to the next piece of choreography: a floor sequence and a raised arm variation. The researcher explained how each of these two parts of the dance related the thematic elemental study. Moving on the floor in a kneeling, supplicatory gesture suggested an embodied experience of the Snake's corresponding earth element. Conversely, moving in an upright posture with outstretched arms and a lifted gaze corresponded with the air element of the Heart Chakra. This discussion tied into a previous lecture on the yogic concept of embodying a union of opposites. The researcher explained how clasping the hands in the kneeling position represents a union of the physical and subtle dimensions.

After completing the earth and air Yanvalou study, the researcher introduced the Snake form. She also demonstrated two variations of the deep transitional lunge. After checking to see if there were any questions, the researcher reviewed the Five Animals sequence including the Snake. Afterwards, the researcher assigned the two participants to a breakout room for their first partner work session. After ten minutes, the researcher checked in with the group to answer any questions. Once the breakout session ended, the researcher led the Five Animals to a new piece of musical accompaniment.

The standing meditation practice began with some troubleshooting recommendations. This included a short discussion about the nature of the practice and how to apply the concepts of the lower Chakras to this technique. The next level of the pole standing posture was introduced, which is the first pose of the martial arts warm-up. Once the meditation and journaling exercises

were completed, the researcher asked the participants for feedback about their experience of combining the earth and air elements. The researcher explained that the final class would include more opportunities for dialogue and surveyed the participants about their level of confidence with engaging in that process.

*Class #5: Throat Chakra, Yanvalou and Crane*

The fifth class began with a condensed version of the martial arts warm-up. The Sun Salutation series was prefaced with a study of how to balance in Tree pose. The yoga portion of the class was tailored to the Crane study so it included variations of Warrior 3 and a review of hip-opening postures. The peak pose of this series was a high lunge variation for stretching the neck and throat. This led to a review of the wide-standing lunge sequence, which provided a continuation of the Warrior 3 study. Next, the researcher led a review of the martial arts leg lift series with the addition of an outside crescent kick drill. This series concluded with a held leg lift exercise for increasing strength, flexibility, and balance. The leg lift series provided the foundation for practicing the *battement développ * extension in the Crane form.

After providing a brief overview of the five-element application of the Yanvalou, the researcher led two rounds of the choreography with music. Afterward, she led a brief stretching exercise for neck and spinal traction. This cool-down served as a transition before practicing the Crane form. Between leading two rounds of the Crane, the researcher explained how to practice this form with an awareness of the aether element. This built upon the floating arm exercise as the movement quality of this element relates to feeling very spacious and light. Next, the researcher led a review of the Five Animals before using the post study observation rubric to assess the sole participant's progress.

In the final portion of the class the researcher introduced a short form of the Five Animals. This condensed version entailed holding each pose at a rate of a 1:1 breath to held posture ratio as opposed to the previous 3:1 ratio that had been utilized throughout the series. A new piece of music accompanied the next two rounds of the short form. For the last round, the researcher added a freestyle dance component during the 32-count introduction of the music. She explained that the purpose of improvising was to open the joints, loosen the spine, and increase the feeling of the flow state. Afterward, the researcher assessed the participant's meditation practice according to the rubric criteria. In lieu of the journaling exercise, the participant completed the exit survey for the final portion of the class. Since the other two active participants could not attend, they completed the home study version of the class in the following week. The researcher completed their assessments after watching their videos of the Five Animals.

### **Summary of the Study Process**

There were four main components of this research study: the creation of the curriculum and research instruments, the presentation of the curriculum, the implementation of the research instruments, and the final assessment procedures. Throughout the course of this study, the researcher documented her observations and collected the participants' journal entries and survey responses. She also conducted the observational assessment with the post-study rubric in a live setting and while viewing the video submissions. Despite the high technical learning curve and numerous procedural changes, the overall success of this study outweighed the obstacles. As with any project launch, there were strengths and weaknesses but every step of this process provided the researcher with invaluable insights. The overall response was positive and many of the participants expressed an interest in future evolutions of this curriculum project.

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

#### **Introduction**

The researcher began this study by asking: What are the holistic health benefits of combining three somatic movement forms in an intercultural modern dance format? She set out to investigate this problem with the goal of advancing the modern dance tradition of experimental fusion. The participants' journal entries and commentary throughout the study provided evidence of contemplative reflection and altered state of consciousness (ASC) experiences from the somatic explorations. In reviewing this qualitative data, three emergent themes were coded as: 1) Lived Knowledge, 2) Subjective Experiences of Qi, and 3) Elements of Flow. Lived Knowledge, as defined by Angeline Young, is when a student makes a connection between course content and his or her own lived experience. This theme was chosen to support Young's goal of promoting inclusivity of lived experience in dance education.

For this multimethod research study, the qualitative data of the participants' in-class discussions, journal entries, and additional written feedback were cross-referenced with the quantitative fields of the exit survey. The researcher examined the portions of the survey that were based on Yvonne Wai Yi Chow's physical and mental indicators of the qi state. Next, the researcher identified any verbal and written responses that aligned with these survey results. She repeated this process with survey questions that were based on Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's parameters for the flow state. These two themes were chosen as a means of highlighting two

evidence-based approaches to generating an altered state of consciousness. The data were triangulated with the researcher's observations, the post-study rubric, and the exit survey results.

## **Data Analysis**

### *Entrance Survey*

This study's population was a small group of five American adults. In the entrance survey, the participants were asked to list their approximate age ranges, educational backgrounds, and backgrounds in dance, yoga, martial arts, and meditation. They were also polled about any experiences with a selection of somatic techniques including the Alexander technique, the Feldenkrais method, Rolfing structural integration, contact improvisation, Pilates, and Laban movement analysis.

Two of the females, who are referred to by the pseudonyms "Agatha" and "Jacqueline," are between twenty-six and forty years old and their highest level of education at the time of the study was a bachelor's degree. Agatha is a certified dance fitness instructor with over three years of formal adult dance training. She self-identified as having a little experience with meditation and attended adult yoga classes at her gym for over three years. Jacqueline, (who goes by Jaci) is a mixed Martial Arts instructor and a yoga instructor. She is an intermediate meditation practitioner and had one to three years of childhood dance training. The third female, "Louisa," is in the forty-one to fifty-six age range and is a high school graduate. Louisa had over three years of adult dance training and three years of childhood dance training. She also attended beginner yoga classes as a child for six months to one year. The Caucasian-Asian male, known as "Oznek," is also in the forty-one to fifty-six year old age range and is a high school graduate. Oznek had one to three years of adult martial arts training in Gojyuryu Karate. The other male participant, who went by "Sheep," is in the fifty-seven to sixty-four age range and has a

bachelor's degree. Sheep had one to three years of training in beginning and advanced adult ballet. He is also an intermediate Transcendental Meditation practitioner. As for the somatic practices, Agatha and Jaci were familiar with Pilates.

### *Challenges Encountered*

Most of the qualitative data collected were from the participants' journal entries. The length of these entries ranged from a few sentences for each question to one page for both responses. Some of the participants' responses were very succinct and touched on key points while other entries were written in a clear, free-flowing reflective style. Certain responses demonstrated an understanding of the direction to ignore spelling and grammatical errors while other entries indicated a focus on correct formatting.

At the end of the first four classes, the participants completed the contemplative writing exercises. In the responses to the prompt, "What was challenging?" three factors affected the subjects' abilities to participate in the online bi-weekly class format. The first related to the online learning environment as both Sheep and Louisa experienced issues with using the Zoom platform. Sheep listed one of his challenges as staying engaged in the lesson while maintaining control of the Zoom settings. During class, he expressed his confusion about the start time of the first class, which was the reason for why he did not bring his athletic attire. This was Louisa's first attempt at using Zoom and she started out by viewing the classes with her phone. She also encountered several scheduling conflicts due to work and personal commitments and experienced some initial distractions in her home environment. Despite these obstacles, Louisa expressed her desire to give this project her best effort but by the end of the third class, she wrote that a "minimum [of] space and time seems to be influencing ability and achievements." In



response to these journal entries, the researcher provided her with options for alternate viewing methods and Louisa's teenage daughter assisted her with navigating technical challenges.

A variety of participants' physical issues also factored into the results of this study. Louisa's difficulty with viewing the classes on her phone was further amplified by macular degeneration and she struggled to find the correct positions. After the second class, she acknowledged her biggest challenges were balance and transitions while trying to avoid aggravating herniated discs in her lower back and bone spurs in her neck. After the fourth class, she noted "the snake was almost impossible because of lack of movement in upper and lower spine."

Oznek, Agatha, and Jaci also experienced a degree of physical challenges. In his journal entry, Oznek said he felt a bit stiff from a lack of previous exercise and had difficulty finding the correct positions. During the second class, Agatha said she felt tight from not dancing during the summer months. Afterward, she journaled about how her hips were her tightest body part and were always sore. For the first few classes, Jaci noted she had difficulty finding the correct position in the final meditation. She described this experience as a lack of feeling "settled, relaxed, and 'in the zone.'" After the fourth class, Jaci acknowledged a need for greater hamstring flexibility.

Oznek and Agatha wrote about their observations of the mental challenges they encountered in this study. After attending the first class, Oznek shared his reflections with the researcher: "I feel like the biggest obstacle in this endeavor is training the mind and body to constantly perform these various energy manipulations without being conscious of it." After Class #1, Agatha journaled about her ongoing struggle to check in with herself as she felt like she was always "on the go." For the first four classes, Agatha was challenged by the direction to

let go of traditional dance form and muscle activation and had difficulty moving from her breath rather than from a count. After learning the break for the Yanvalou, she said it was “a little awkward for me because I’m not used to moving outside of my box... my ballerina box, but it felt really good.”

*Participant Responses to the Curriculum*

**Theme 1: Lived Knowledge**

After completing Class #1, Oznek shared further reflections on his experience with the religious practices of the West African diaspora. During the study, he sent the researcher YouTube videos of traditional ceremonial music and described his experiences with his local community. He also drew a comparison between his observations of the trance state and the class content:

Yes, (Santeria and voodoo) is everywhere here. We have a huge Cuban-Haitian population. I’ve seen dances, curses, chicken/goat sacrifice, voodoo shops called botanicas everywhere. They sell blank voodoo dolls in a barrel for \$5. I have a couple of friends who are babalawos. It seems like the entranced individuals look like their energy is rooted in the ground. Like our exercises today.

Agatha made numerous connections among the course content, her self-care practices, and her progress throughout the workshop. When asked about how her wrists felt after practicing the Tiger, she responded: “That’s another thing for me that I’ve been going through recently from actually COVID and having to work from home and not my nice desk at work. I feel like I’m getting early onset of carpal tunnel. It actually feels really good to do this, and actually it feels therapeutic to my forearms.”

In her Class #2 journal entry, Agatha noted how “personally, this all relates to myself in the sense that I [am] challenge[d] to ‘Flow’ and ‘Let Go’ as well as I tend to be pretty rigid and linear.” She also applied what she had learned in the first class to her struggles with her hips: “The hip-openers in the Sun Salutations made me want to cry but I thought about what I’d learned in the first workshop and even wrote about – slow down and breathe. I need someone to whisper that to me on a daily basis!” In her third journal entry, Agatha wrote about drawing a connection between the Leopard’s target organ of the liver and being on Day 2 of a liquid cleanse. She also reflected on her progress with the technique of moving from her breath saying, “For me, it’s about breaking away from being rigid with counting, and even trying to breathe, I’m counting my breaths. That’s just how I think. So it’s just trying to let that go because I’m really rigid in that action, that’s just my conditioning – for everything in life! I’m trying to let myself breathe. I feel like I’m getting a little better at it each time.”

After participating in Class #2, Jaci wrote she felt more relaxed and confident and the class was exactly what she needed. In Class #2, Tiger reflected on her progress: “For me, the things from tonight are really easy for me to do. I just sit in that space, that’s just me. I love this tiger thing, it’s just like putting it all together is kind of all... it’s all new, so it’s all... more practice, more feel.” At the end of Class #4, Jaci spoke about using breath awareness to assist her with integrating the three movement modalities: “It makes sense, and it all flows together it’s just that it’s so very, very new it’s still a lot of thinking when I’m doing this and this... I mean, yes, if I can let go of the... just stop being ridiculous and just kind of breathe then it kind of will just happen more naturally for me. But it certainly does all move together and feel good.”

In her journal entries, Louisa described certain realizations she experienced from listening to the lectures as “light bulb moments.” In her Class #3 entry, she connected what she had learned about subtle anatomy with her physical health history:

The entirety of Dantian/sea of Qi was enlightening. As someone who experienced perimenopause at an early age and then post-menopause from 2017; the correlation of Life Force Energy and its changes seems synonymous. As menopause progressed, energy and will to strive or even grow had significantly decreased. This by far was the most intriguing of lessons because of my personal circumstances and will be continuing to research more.

Louisa also wrote about a connection between the backbends lecture and an ongoing challenge with her physical therapy regimen. In her Class #4 journal entry, she discussed how Agatha’s analogy for teaching backbends provided her with a new way of approaching this exercise. Louisa wrote: “That position has been a long-time PT exercise for herniated discs in the lower back. To redirect that feeling from painful to ‘water flowing over chest’ gave an entirely different feeling to that particular exercise.” Sheep also journaled about learning to be comfortable in the movements. He also noted that “breathing is everything!” and “it’s okay to make mistakes.”

### **Theme 2: Subjective Experiences of Qi**

In comparing the qualitative data with the results of the subjective experiences of qi questions (see Figures 1 and 2), the researcher identified instances where the participants used language that corresponded with the selection of physical and mental criteria from Yvonne Wai Yi Chow’s study. Three of the participants indicated an awareness of subtle energy and/or a shift in their physical homeostasis that affected their subjective experiences of qi. Oznek wrote that he

learned “about the transfer of energy fluidly and the importance of exact stance positioning.” Throughout the series, Jaci described numerous instances where she experienced qi flow while performing the exercises. After the first class, she wrote about how the circular motions in the warm-up “stirred up energy within me.” In her Class #2 entry, she wrote, “An amazing flow of energy can happen from releasing and stretching hips. It is a strong, creative energy.” By the fourth class, she was able to find the correct position in the final meditation: “Tonight, something about the meditation at the end clicked. It felt more natural, and I was able to start relaxing and feeling energy flow as we did it. The description you gave really helped today.”

In her efforts to practice the Snake form with limited mobility, Louisa’s self-directed modifications of the sequence yielded notable results. In her Class #4 entry, she described the effects of deconstructing the Snake while maintaining awareness of her physical limitations: “Picking it apart and doing what I can with it does create an odd sense of uncomfortable relief. If that makes sense?” After completing the exit survey, she sent the researcher a follow up explanation of her responses: “My tingles and numbness is normal. The only difference this time was numbness in the left foot when doing the snake.”

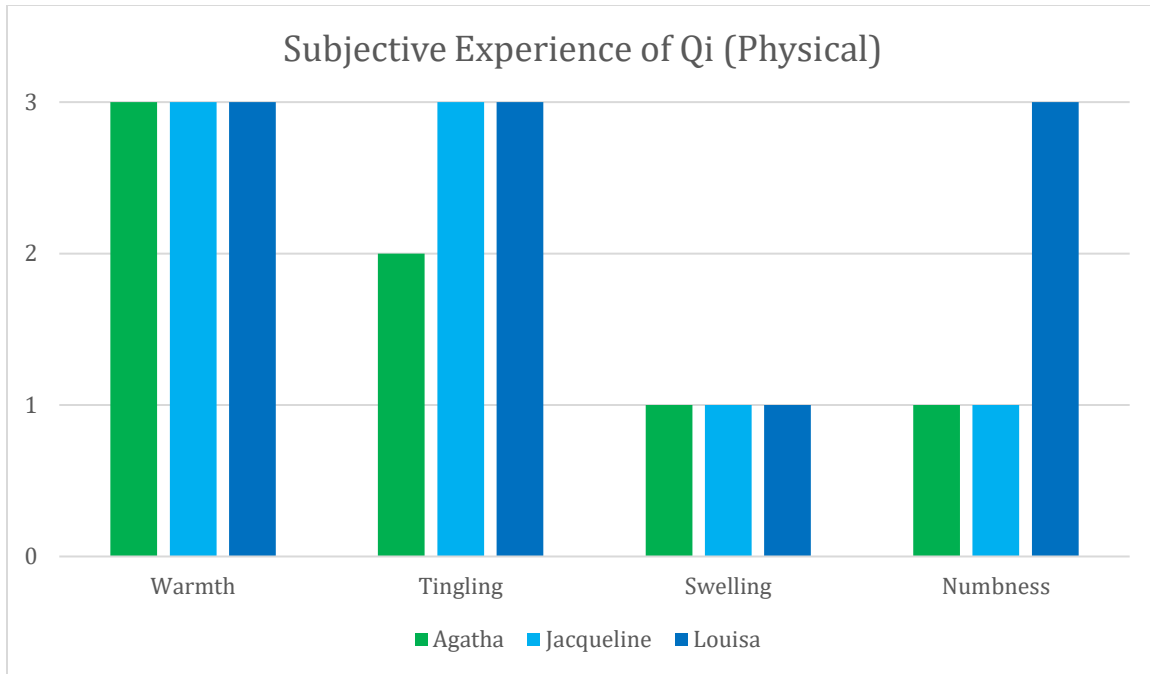


Fig. 1. Participants reported bodily feelings as defined in Yvonne Wai Yi Chow's study. 1 = No, 2 = Not Sure, 3 = Yes.

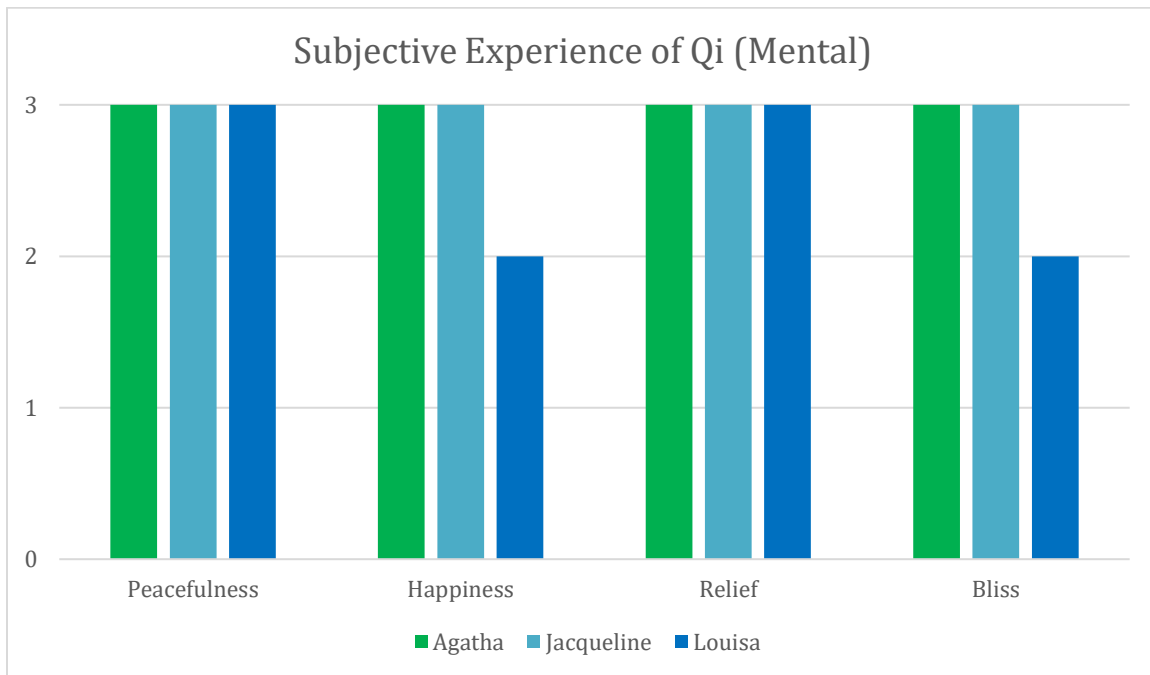


Fig. 2. Participants reported any mental sentiments as defined in Chow's study. 1 = No, 2 = Not Sure, 3 = Yes.

### **Theme 3: Elements of Flow**

In analyzing the participants' responses to the survey questions that were based on the components of flow (see Figures 3 and 4), the researcher identified instances where language was used to indicate the participants' level of engagement, enjoyment, and comfort with learning new materials. The researcher compared the participants' qualitative responses from their journal entries and commentary with the results of the Components of Flow exit survey. The only comment about engagement levels was made by Louisa at the conclusion of the study. In her final text message to the researcher, Louisa explained how she had interpreted that question. She listed zero on the 10-point scale since she did not consider herself as being actively involved in the live Zoom classes. This contrasted with the other two participants' responses of a 9 and 10.

Jaci used the word "flow" numerous times in her written journal reflections about the classes. Halfway through the series, she described her overall level of enjoyment as being related to feelings of energetic activation and personal empowerment. In her Class #3 entry, she wrote, "I am enjoying how all the animals flow together. It's awakening energy in me and feels good. I also loved the addition to the Yanvalou. The sun sal was empowering." After Class #4, Jaci described her appreciation of the fluid quality of the snake and its associated energy. She also noted the warm-up and sun salutations had supported her ability to successfully practice the Five Animals.

At the end of Class #4, Jaci and Agatha shared their thoughts about their progress with integrating the three movement modalities. The researcher asked them to consider their level of comfort with contributing to the next class discussion about merging the fire and aether elements. Both participants expressed their level of integration was contingent on being new to much of the content. Agatha shared she understood the rationale involved with chakra activation

by way of practicing asanas that target a specific region of the body. She also said she felt challenged by the idea of assimilating that information into the Five Animals: “But trying to bring that into the other movement, that’s where just as Jaci said it’s very new, so taking that concept and putting it into that movement is kind of difficult to wrap your head around it. But the way that you’ve structured the warm-up to correlate to that focus is really extremely helpful, I think.”

Jaci also spoke of the effect that the structure of the course materials was having on her learning process. She pinpointed the warm-up as the source of her ability to comprehend the relationship between the modalities “Just to build on what Agatha just said, is that the warmup is the only reason that it makes sense. If you don’t do all of the things that we do for 35, 40 minutes ahead of that last section it would not make sense. It makes sense because it is that whole entire thing that we are doing.”

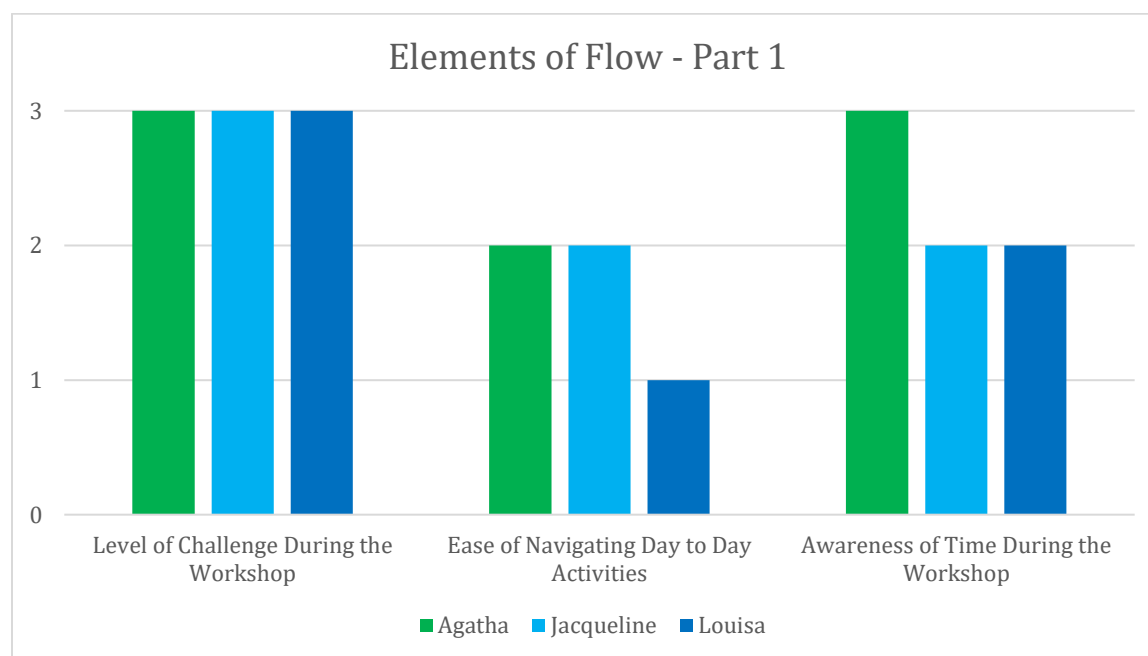


Fig. 3. Participants responded to questions related to the components of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s flow state. 1 = Limited, 2 = Developing, 3 = Optimal.



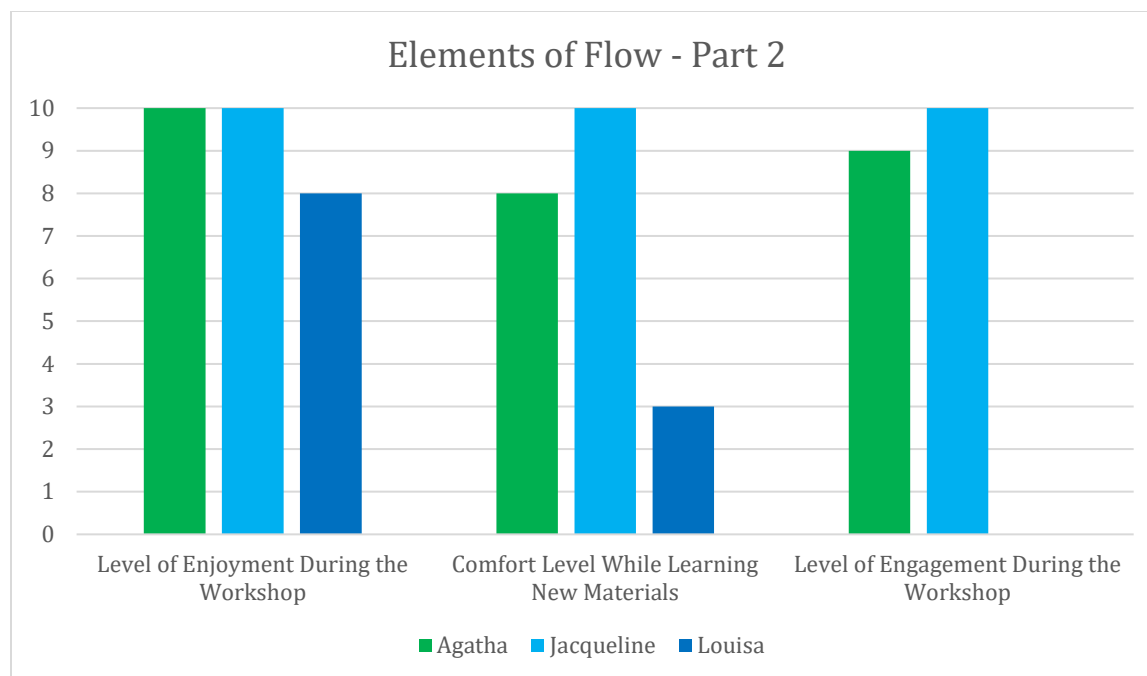


Fig. 4. Participants responded to additional questions based on the components of flow.

#### *Post-Study Rubric Analysis*

The researcher cross-referenced the results of her post-study observational rubric with the remaining exit survey questions (see Figures 5-11). Agatha's survey responses regarding her final physical energy, pain, and flexibility levels matched the researcher's observations of her video submission. According to the researcher, Agatha demonstrated a high level of physical energy and coordination and was able to follow the Class #5 recording of the short form without any breaks in her sequencing. Agatha ranked her final mental and emotional energy level as high with low levels of stress and depression. These results corresponded with the researcher's observations of Agatha's participation and reflections. Agatha listed she had experienced all four of the mental sentiments of the subjective experience of qi, and the researcher noted her observations of these qualities in Agatha's participation in the workshop.

Jaci reported high post-study physical energy and flexibility levels with a low pain response. She also ranked the final state of her mental and emotional energy level as high with

low levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Jaci was the only participant who performed the short form at the end of Class #5 without any assistance and was able to perform the sequence without any hesitation. The researcher noted there were numerous times Jaci had documented her experiences of the positive mental states, which matched the results of her post-study survey.

Louisa's post-survey results indicated she experienced low physical energy, moderate pain, and low flexibility levels throughout the study. She reported having a consistently low state of mental and emotional energy but experienced a decrease in her stress, anxiety, and depression levels both during and after the study. In the researcher's observations of Louisa's final video submission, the researcher noted Louisa demonstrated a high level of focus, fluid transitions within her modification of the movements, and balance skill. The researcher did not detect any visible stress responses but did observe a quality of peacefulness in Louisa's performance.

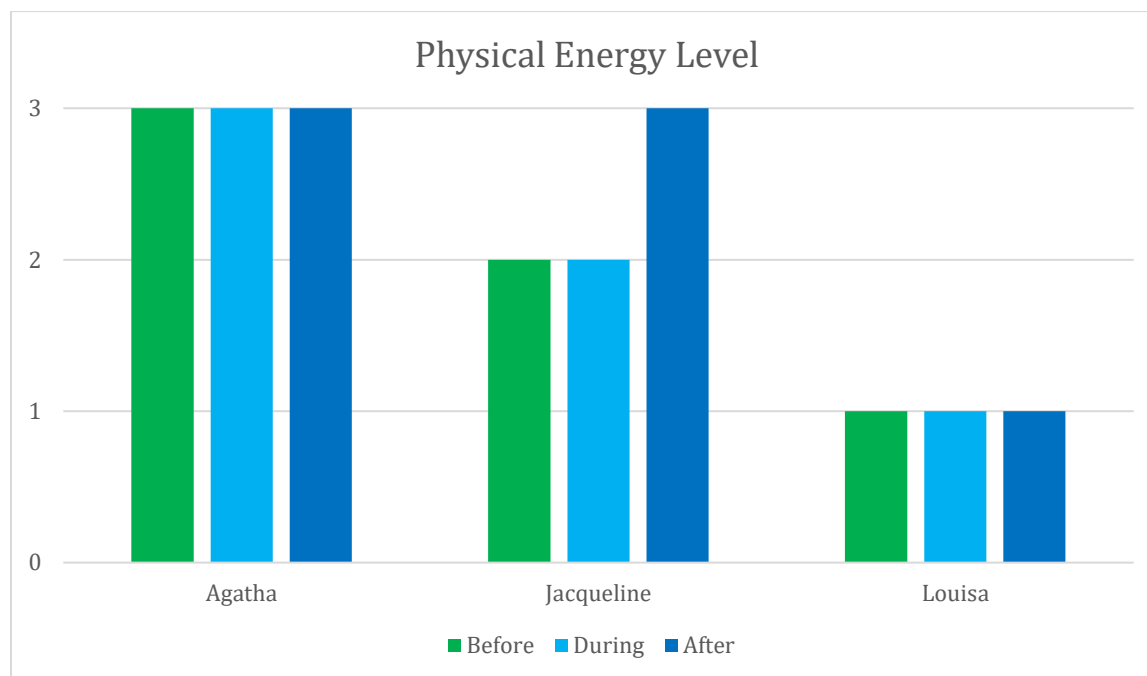


Fig. 5. Participants reported changes in their physical energy levels. 1 = Low, 2 = Average, 3 = High.

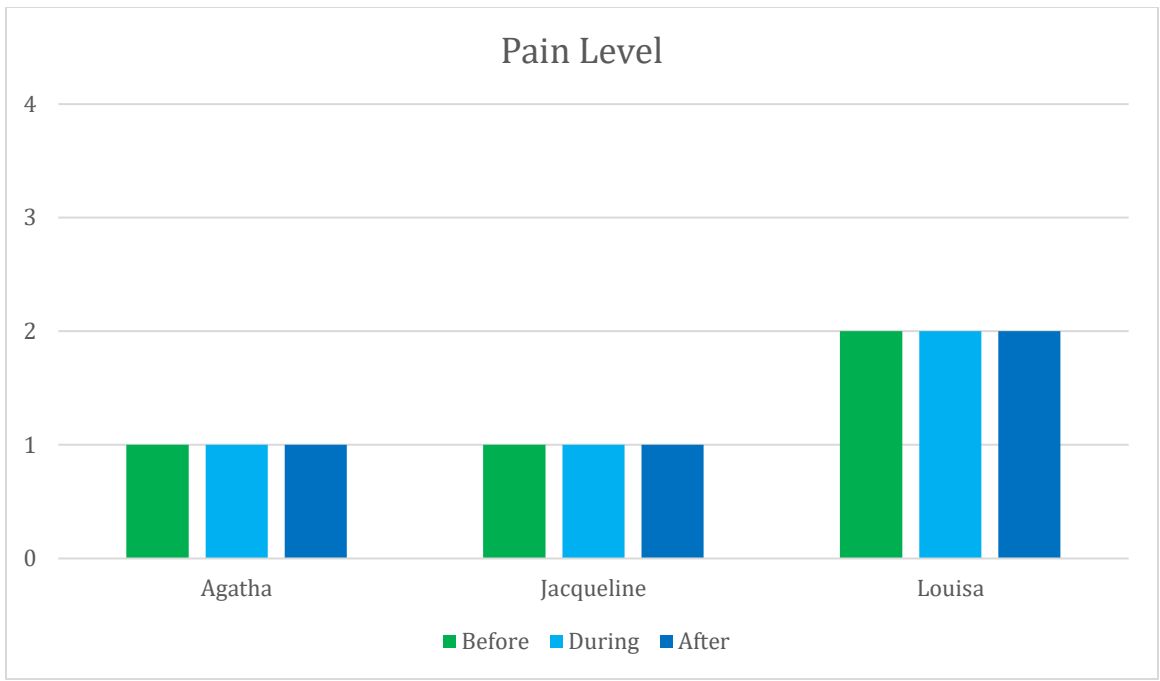


Fig. 6. Participants reported any changes in their pain levels. 0 = Non-existent, 1 = Minor, 2 = Moderate, 3 = Major, 4 = Severe.

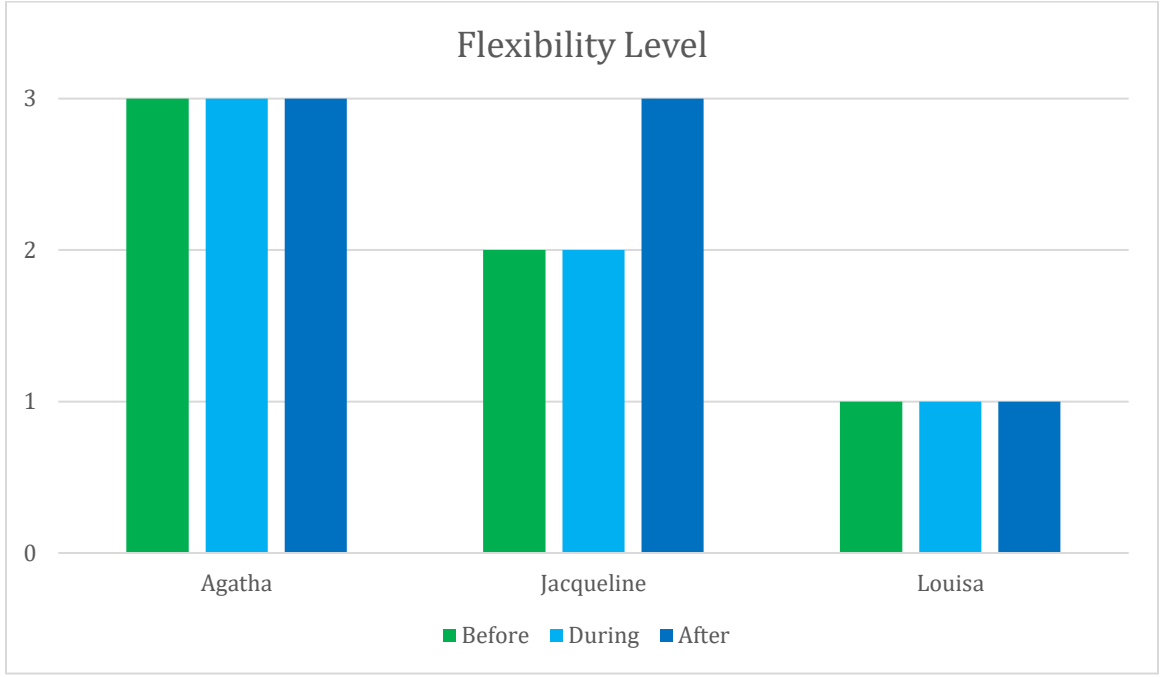


Fig. 7. Participants rated their flexibility levels. 1 = Low, 2 = Average, 3 = High.

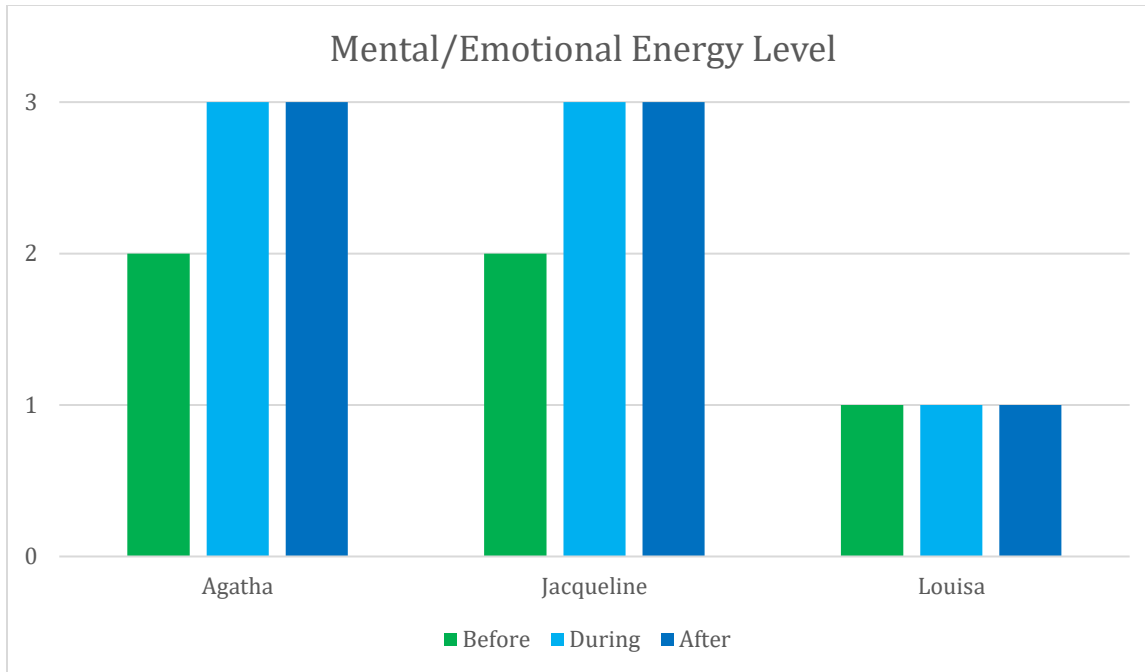


Fig. 8. Participants reported changes in their mental/emotional levels during the workshop. 1 = Low, 2 = Average, 3 = High.

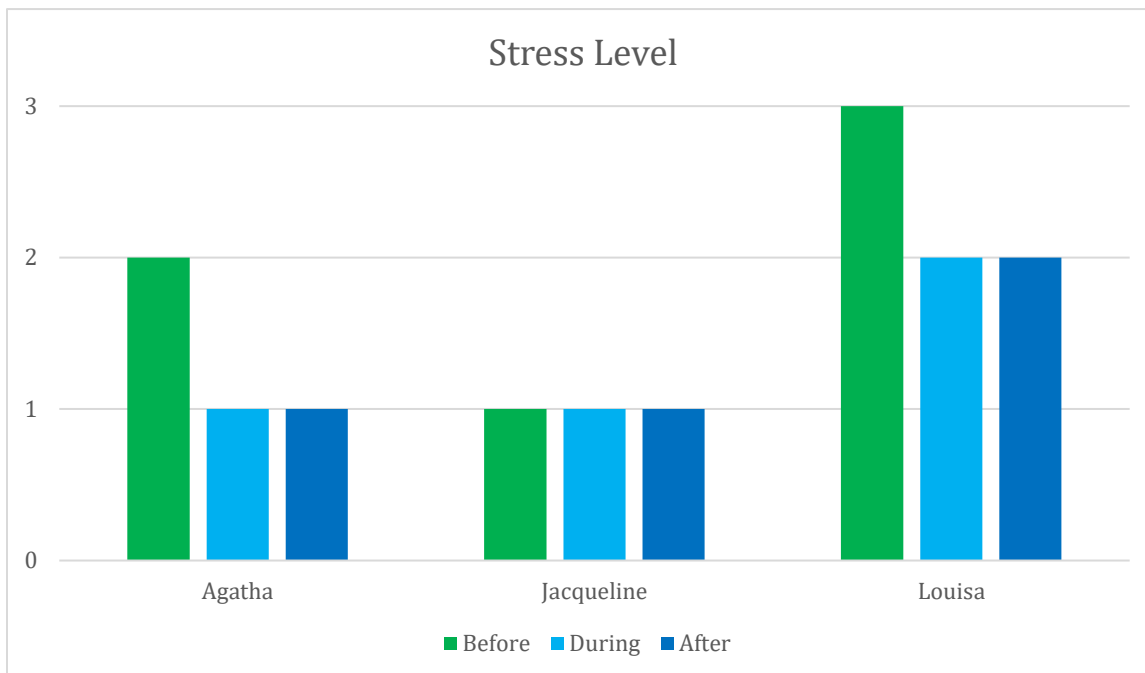


Fig. 9. Participants assessed their stress levels throughout the workshop. 1 = Low, 2 = Average, 3 = High.

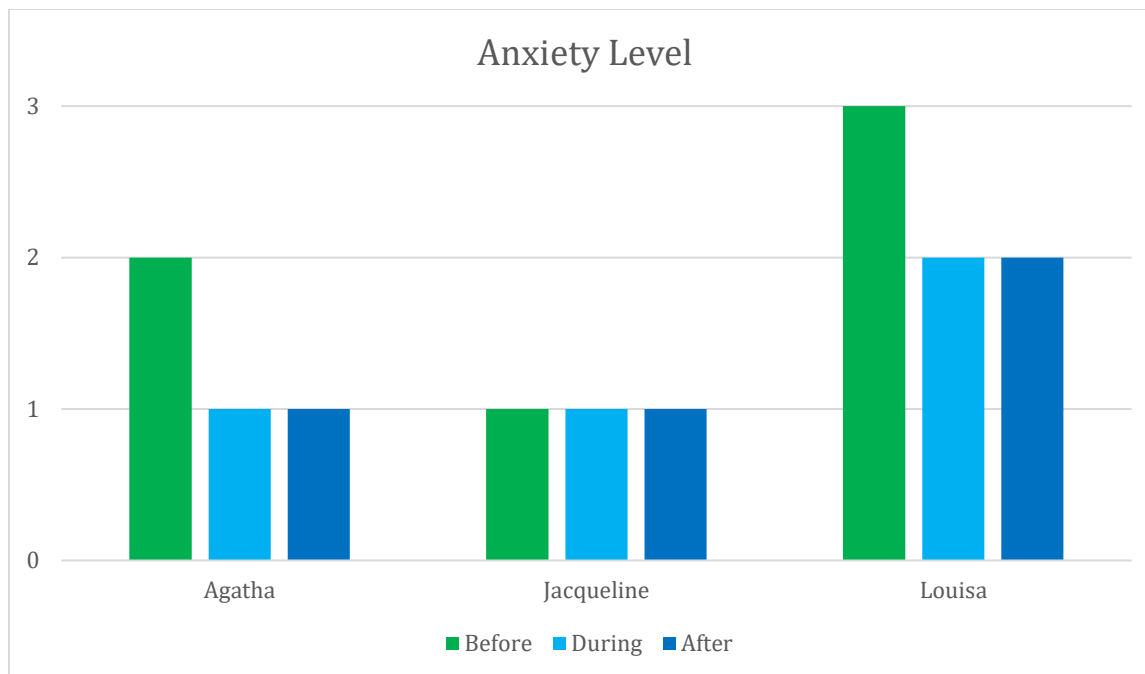


Fig. 10. Participants assessed their anxiety levels throughout the workshop. 1 = Low, 2 = Average, 3 = High.

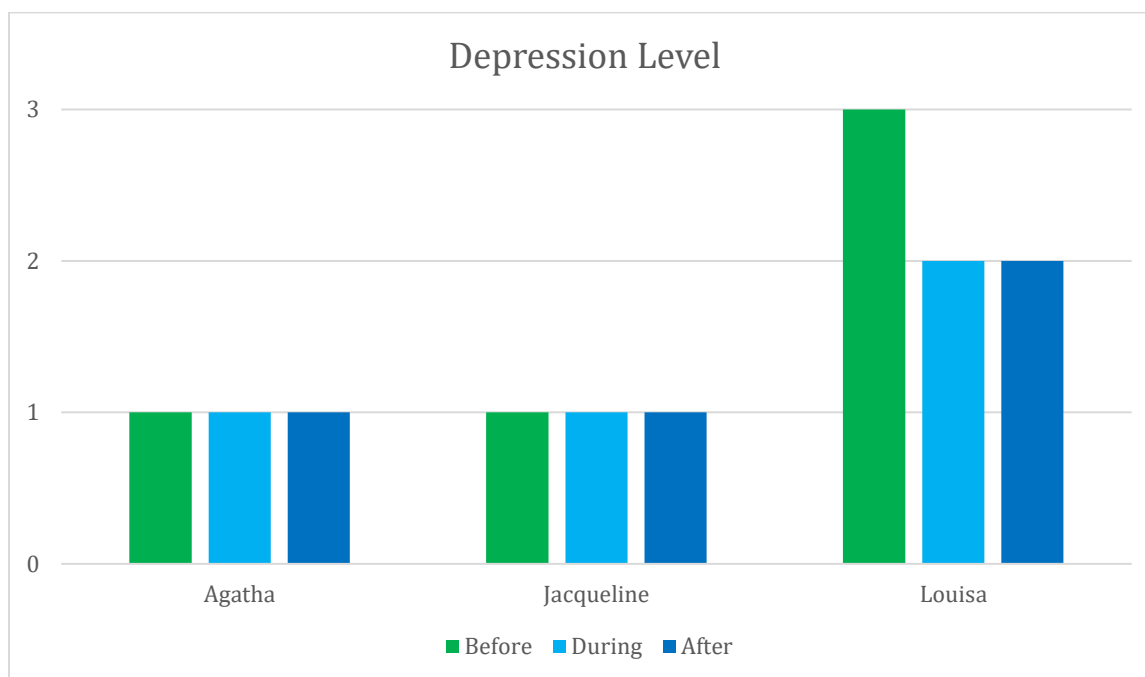


Fig. 11. Participants assessed their stress levels throughout the workshop. 1 = Low, 2 = Average, 3 = High.

## Summary of Discussion

The primary intention of this study was to create an intercultural somatic curriculum that increased health, personal empowerment, and altered states of consciousness. In seeking to identify the holistic benefits of an intercultural somatic dance class, the researcher evaluated the physical, mental, and spiritual effects of an innovative trinity of movement forms. The researcher's aim was to provide an inclusive and balanced approach to gauging holistic health levels. The data instruments used in this study included an entrance survey, the participants' journal entries and commentary, the researcher's observations, the post-study rubric, and the exit survey.

In her effort to measure the intangible and subtle effects of her workshop, the researcher cross-referenced the criteria of two proven methods of evaluating an ASC experience. This was a novel approach and as a result, this experiment provided new insight into the relationship among the mind, body, and subtle body. The results of this study agreed with Yvonne Wai Yi Chow's conclusion that qigong is suitable for people with different physical ability levels while promoting positive states of mental health and reducing stress, anxiety, and depression. This study was in alignment with Chow's aim to promote qigong as an affordable nonpharmacological modality and complementary therapy for the general population. This study also advanced the somatic application of the Yanvalou by exploring the relationship between Lavinia William's choreography and the chakras. Furthermore, the techniques of the Yanvalou were utilized for their ability to facilitate correct positioning in the pole stance meditation.

Despite the array of difficulties that the participants and researcher encountered, data collected throughout this study indicated this curriculum had achieved its intended goal. By identifying the respective themes of lived knowledge, subjective experiences of qi, and elements

of flow, the researcher was able to highlight numerous instances that demonstrated the overall effectiveness of this curriculum. Comparing the survey results with the researcher's observations demonstrated how this curriculum was an effective method of holistic health enhancement that supported the aim of contemplative education.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

In reflecting on the overall success of this research study, it was apparent certain goals were met and this first attempt has provided a springboard for future developments. An integrated study of the Five Animals provided the necessary groundwork for merging the three somatic movement forms into five katas. This experiential format allowed the researcher to perform an in-depth comparison of the three modalities. Leading an examination of each component provided the participants with a common denominator of learning comprehension. In hindsight, this format was an essential step in the process of creating a fusion form. Given the volume of learning materials in this study, an intercultural approach to the Five Animals was an appropriate choice for a 10-hour introductory workshop. In considering the definition of a kata as a prototype, this idea was fully realized through the development of this innovative curriculum.

Few deviations from the original intention of the study did occur in the process of implementing the data instruments for this study. Due to the initial confusion the researcher experienced from the high volume of technical issues, she forgot to ask the participants to set a personal goal for the workshop. One flaw in the delivery of the exit survey was due to a settings issue with Qualtrics. This was the first time the researcher had used this survey tool and she did not create the proper setting for the open-ended responses. As a result, the participants could only answer the quantitative data questions. While the researcher strove to accommodate the high volume of scheduling conflicts, the unforeseen addition of a home-study course that ran in conjunction with the in-person workshop led to some gaps in her planning. Subsequently, she did



not ask two of the participants to record their practice of the final meditation. Due to time constraints and additional technical issues that accompanied the video submission process, the researcher opted to leave the Subtle categories of their rubrics blank.

One of the researcher's primary reservations about hosting a Zoom workshop was it would not be possible to meet the curricular goal of practicing in a circle. Since the researcher could not observe the participants on her laptop while she was teaching, she noted that having an external monitor would be helpful. Having gone through this initial trial by fire, she has gained an appreciation of such a versatile and accessible platform. After navigating the significant technical challenges of the first class, the researcher made a correlation between teaching on Zoom and practicing movements that interfaced with the subtle body. She described her realization of "Zoom as an energetic system, running into sticky points, and creating circuitry."

In her final journal entry, the researcher expressed her wish to have a more clearly defined container in which to teach. In hindsight, interruptions could be minimized by establishing a cut off time for late arrivals and sending out reminder texts. The issue of inconsistent attendance was also a longstanding factor in the researcher's planning process. The original intention was to offer this study as an in-person weekend workshop, with the goal of reducing attendance inconsistencies. Diversifying the delivery of this content addressed the issue of missed classes but the home study course did not offer the same level of interaction as the in-person classes. Without being able to observe the home practices, the researcher could only gauge the rate of progress from the journal entries. If the researcher were to offer a hybrid learning format again, she would market the series as including two private sessions. Having additional live contact would also promote greater familiarity with the learning materials.

At the end of the series, Louisa inquired about the possibility of the researcher producing a beginning level dance tutorial video series for home-practice purposes. In planning for this study, the researcher developed and taught two adult Dance Conditioning class series, through the Trinidad State Junior College Community Education program, for the purpose of advertising her workshop while providing introductory training. She also started producing a video library of supplemental learning materials for her students. Due to the COVID lockdowns, the researcher was unable to continue these in-person Dance Conditioning classes. Since then, she has started writing a grant for continuing her research by offering subsidized classes and completing the video library project. It is the researcher's belief that a scholarship program would increase student enrollment and attendance levels in a study of this nature. She also hopes her newly acquired Zoom skill set could lead to additional teaching and funding opportunities. Ultimately, the researcher believes the best educational delivery method for this content is a series of accredited undergraduate courses.

This study also demonstrated how the parameters of the flow state facilitated an altered state of consciousness and the trinity of somatic movement forms could provide subjective experiences of qi. There are numerous areas where this study could be expanded upon for continued research, either in a controlled setting within a condensed timeframe or over a semester-long course. A longer study could include Angeline Young's chakra and qi visualization techniques as well as a home practice requirement. The exit survey could be expanded upon to include more frequent assessments with additional criteria based on Yvonne Wai Yi Chow's instruments.

It was beyond the scope of this study to address the question of how an intercultural somatics course could benefit undergraduate dance and holistic health programs. While this

study was modeled after Young's work with undergraduate students and showed evidence of the benefits of working with adults, further research within a post-secondary institution would be the ideal way to determine the effectiveness of this experimental curriculum. The researcher can only hypothesize that this study would serve undergraduate students with various movement backgrounds and a wide range of experiences in each of the modalities. She can also surmise that this prototype would be well-suited to a Zoom classroom as this curriculum de-emphasizes the necessity of following a specific count and therefore bypasses certain technical challenges. This breath-oriented somatic dance approach also provided a bridge between formalized dance technique and improvisation. While this study contributed a unique perspective on how to combine the three modalities while maintaining the integrity of each movement form, further research is needed for the evolution of the *Kaleidoscopic Katas* format.

In considering how this study facilitated the goal of contemplative education, what set this curriculum apart was its ability to provide a well-rounded, holistic experience of dance education. The journaling exercises provided a means of self-assessment and promoted greater connection with the course materials. These reflective writing practices fostered a sense of immediate feedback that assisted with facilitating the flow state. This curriculum also included multiple meditation practices that were employed in the contemplative classroom. These methods contributed to increased focus, decreased anxiety, awareness of life application, and flexibility in both mind and body. The results indicated this study had informed the development of future workshop variations that could lead to a semester-long course aligning with the greater goal of contemplative education.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL**





Date: 01/05/2021

Principal Investigator: Emily Seymour

Committee Action: **IRB EXEMPT DETERMINATION – New Protocol**

Action Date: 01/05/2021

Protocol Number: [2010012388](#)

Protocol Title: Kaledoscopic Katas: An Intercultural Somatic Curriculum for Holistic Health

Expiration Date:

The University of Northern Colorado Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol and determined your project to be exempt under 45 CFR 46.104(d)(702) (703) for research involving

Category 2 (2018): EDUCATIONAL TESTS, SURVEYS, INTERVIEWS, OR OBSERVATIONS OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR. Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: (i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; (ii) Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or (iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by 45 CFR 46.111(a)(7).

Category 3 (2018): BENIGN BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE COLLECTION OF INFORMATION FROM ADULT SUBJECTS through verbal or written responses (including data entry) or audiovisual recording if the subject prospectively agrees to the intervention and information collection and at least one of the following criteria is met: (A) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; (B) Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or (C) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that



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**Institutional Review Board**

the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by 45 CFR 46.111(a)(7). For the purpose of this provision, benign behavioral interventions are brief in duration, harmless, painless, not physically invasive, not likely to have a significant adverse lasting impact on the subjects, and the investigator has no reason to think the subjects will find the interventions offensive or embarrassing. Provided all such criteria are met, examples of such benign behavioral interventions would include having the subjects play an online game, having them solve puzzles under various noise conditions, or having them decide how to allocate a nominal amount of received cash between themselves and someone else. If the research involves deceiving the subjects regarding the nature or purposes of the research, this exemption is not applicable unless the subject authorizes the deception through a prospective agreement to participate in such research.

You may begin conducting your research as outlined in your protocol. Your study does not require further review from the IRB, unless changes need to be made to your approved protocol.

**As the Principal Investigator (PI), you are still responsible for contacting the UNC IRB office if and when:**

- You wish to deviate from the described protocol and would like to formally submit a modification request. Prior IRB approval must be obtained before any changes can be implemented (except to eliminate an immediate hazard to research participants).
- You make changes to the research personnel working on this study (add or drop research staff on this protocol).
- At the end of the study or before you leave The University of Northern Colorado and are no longer a student or employee, to request your protocol be closed. \*You cannot continue to reference UNC on any documents (including the informed consent form) or conduct the study under the auspices of UNC if you are no longer a student/employee of this university.
- You have received or have been made aware of any complaints, problems, or adverse events that are related or possibly related to participation in the research.

If you have any questions, please contact the Research Compliance Manager, Nicole Morse, at 970-351-1910 or via e-mail at [nicole.morse@unco.edu](mailto:nicole.morse@unco.edu). Additional information concerning the requirements for the protection of human subjects may be found at the Office of Human Research Protection website - <http://hhs.gov/ohrp/> and <https://www.unco.edu/research/research-integrity-and-compliance/institutional-review-board/>.

Sincerely,



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**Institutional Review Board**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicole Morse".

Nicole Morse  
Research Compliance Manager

University of Northern Colorado: FWA00000784

2010012388

**APPENDIX B**  
**CONSENT FORM**



CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO  
ADULT WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT

**Thesis Title:** Kaleidoscopic Katas: An Intercultural Somatic Curriculum for Holistic Health

**Researcher:** Emily Seymour, Graduate Student at the University of Northern Colorado

**Contact Information:** [REDACTED] E-mail: [seym9946@bears.unco.edu](mailto:seym9946@bears.unco.edu)

**Research Advisor:** Christy O'Connell-Black, [Christy.OConnellBlack@unco.edu](mailto:Christy.OConnellBlack@unco.edu)

You are cordially invited to participate in a research study of the holistic health benefits of an experimental modern dance curriculum. This innovative fusion format will include somatic elements of Afro-Modern, Qigong, and Yoga. I am requesting your permission to document your experience of this workshop (physical location TBD or via Zoom). Thank you for reading this form carefully. Please let me know if you have any questions before agreeing to participate.

**Background:** This study is inspired by twenty years of the teacher/researcher's lived experience, interest in the sacred geometry of the body, and curiosity about cultivating longevity through a holistic approach to spinal activation.

**What the study is about:** The purpose of this thesis is threefold: (1) To expand upon pre-existing somatic research of the selected movement practices. Somatics refers to the study of the self through a conscious experience of the body. (2) To develop a modern dance technique class that will serve as the basis of an undergraduate curriculum. Each of the five 2-hour classes will include elements of the Yanvalou (a traditional Afro-Haitian serpent dance), Chakra Yoga (a somatic application of subtle body energy centers), and the Five Animal Frolic (one of the earliest forms of medical Qigong). These elements will be combined into five katas (choreographed patterns of martial arts movements) that may enhance wellness, feelings of empowerment, and altered states of consciousness (a.k.a. the "Flow" state). (3) To document the holistic health benefits of this intercultural approach to meditative movement. Holistic health refers to the physical, mental and spiritual/subtle aspects of a person's well being. The research that is collected in this graduate project will assist the teacher/researcher, future adult students, and readers of the final thesis in understanding the holistic health benefits of this groundbreaking approach to modern dance.

Page 1 of 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Workshop participant's initials here)



**What to Expect:** Each workshop will consist of 15 minutes of lecture and/or demonstration of key principles, theories, and techniques. Participants will be led in a 90-minute dance class, followed by 5 minutes of silent meditation. Each workshop will conclude with 10 minutes of guided journal reflections. The teacher/researcher will use this time to document her observations. Participants will also submit pre and post-study surveys, which should take no longer than 20 minutes to complete. This workshop is open to any adult (18-64) who feels comfortable participating in 90-minute classes of low-impact exercises for strength, flexibility, and balance.

**Risks:** The risks and discomforts inherent in this study are no greater than those normally encountered while participating in a dance or yoga class.

**Your answers will be confidential.** Every effort will be made to protect your identity. The records of this study will be kept private. Any sort of report I make public will not include any identifying information. No actual names will be used as I will use pseudonyms. All hard copies of documents pertaining to this study will be stored in a locked cabinet in Crabbe Hall, room 308, the office of Dance Education MA co-coordinator Christy O'Connell-Black. My plan is to hand deliver the completed consent forms when I am on campus in July of 2021. If in-person classes are not being held then I will mail the forms via FedEx. Electronic copies of the pre and post surveys will be stored on Qualtrics, UNC's confidential online survey platform.

**Taking part is voluntary:** Taking part in this study is completely voluntary.

**If you have questions:** The teacher/researcher conducting this study is Emily Seymour. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me with the information listed above. Please retain one copy of this letter for your records. Thank you for assisting me in my research. – Emily Seymour

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, Office of Research, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

Page 2 of 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
(Workshop participant's initials here)



College of Performing and Visual Arts  
*School of Theatre Arts and Dance*

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO  
ADULT WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT

**Thesis Title:** Kaleidoscopic Katas: An Intercultural Somatic Curriculum for Holistic Health

**Researcher:** Emily Seymour, Graduate Student at the University of Northern Colorado

**Contact Information:** [REDACTED] E-mail: seym9946@bears.unco.edu

**Research Advisor:** Christy O'Connell-Black, [Christy.OConnellBlack@unco.edu](mailto:Christy.OConnellBlack@unco.edu)

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future references. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Sherry May, IRB Administrator, Office of Sponsored Programs, 25 Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

**Statement of Consent:** I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Participant's Full Name (please print)                      Participant's Birth Date (month/day/year)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Participant's Signature                                              Date (month/day/year)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Researcher's Signature                                              Date (month/day/year)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Printed Name of Researcher Obtaining Consent              Date (month/day/year)


*All data and consent forms will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study.*

**APPENDIX C**  
**SURVEYS**



## Entrance Survey

### Security

 I'm not a robot   
reCAPTCHA  
Privacy - Terms

Pseudonym (alternate name for this study)

### Date

Today's date: (MM/DD/YYYY)

### Demographics

Age

18-25

26-40

41-56

57-64

### Highest Level of Education

High School Graduate

Associate's Degree

Bachelor's Degree

Master's Degree

Doctoral or Professional Degree

Please tell us about your Dance background (select all that apply):

No formal training

6 months - 1 year of formal childhood training

1 - 3 years of formal childhood training

3+ years of formal childhood training

6 months - 1 year of formal adult training

1 - 3 years of formal adult training

3+ years of formal adult training

Do you have any of the following certifications/degrees (select all that apply):

Dance Fitness (Zumba, Dance Jam, etc.)

Dance Minor in College

Dance Major in College

State Teaching License in Dance

Masters Degree in Dance

Doctorate in Dance

Please tell us about what style(s) of Dance you may have been trained in:

Please tell us about your Martial Arts background (select all that apply):

- No formal training
- 6 months - 1 year of formal childhood training
- 1-3 years of formal childhood training
- 3+ years of formal childhood training
- 6 months - 1 year of formal adult training
- 1-3 years of formal adult training
- 3+ years of formal adult training
- Instructor/Teacher

Please tell us about what style(s) of Martial Arts that you may have been trained in:

Please tell us about your Yoga background (select all that apply):

- No formal training
- 6 months - 1 year of formal childhood training
- 1-3 years of formal childhood training
- 3+ years of formal childhood training
- 6 months - 1 year of formal adult training
- 1-3 years of formal adult training
- 3+ years of formal adult training
- Instructor/Teacher

Please tell us about what style(s) of Yoga that you may have been trained in:

Please tell us about your current experience level with practicing Meditation (select all that apply):

No experience/absolute beginner

A little experience/novice

Some experience/developing

Significant experience/intermediate

Considerable experience/advanced

Instructor/Teacher

Please tell us about what style(s) of Meditation that you may have practiced:

If you have practiced meditation before, in what physical way was it performed?  
(Select all that apply):

Prone/lying down

Seated

Standing

Walking

Moving

Do you have previous experience with any of the following somatics techniques  
(select all that apply):

Alexander Technique

Feldenkrais Method

Rolfing Structural Integration

Contact Improvisation

Pilates

Laban Movement Analysis

Other

## Kaleidoscopic Katas

### Researcher Post Study Rubric

Dancer's Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

Holistic Health	Mastery	Proficient	Novice
<i>Physical</i>			
Energy	High energy, no limitations due to pain responses.	Moderate energy, some limitations due to pain responses.	Low energy, very limited due to pain responses.
Execution	Fluid coordination, full range of motion in all exercises.	Fair level of coordination, moderate range of motion.	Uneven coordination, limited range of motion.
<i>Mental/Emotional</i>			
Energy	Very positive attitude, no visible stress responses.	Neutral attitude, occasional stress responses.	Negative attitude, frequent stress responses.
Positive Mental States	Displayed 3-4 of the following: Peacefulness, happiness, relief, bliss.	Displayed 1-2 positive states of mind.	Displayed 0-1 positive states of mind.
<i>Subtle</i>			
Connection	High level of adaptation and integration. Very relaxed while meditating.	Moderate level of adaptation and integration. Somewhat relaxed in meditation.	Low level of adaptation and integration. Visibly tense while meditating.
Presence	Highly attentive, engaged, and focused.	Somewhat attentive and engaged. Lost focus occasionally.	Low level of attention and engagement. Was easily distracted.

## Kaleidoscopic Katas

### Researcher Post Study Rubric

Dancer: Agatha

Holistic Health	Mastery	Proficient	Novice
<i>Physical</i>			
Energy	High energy, no limitations due to pain responses.	Moderate energy, some limitations due to pain responses.	Low energy, very limited due to pain responses.
Execution	Fluid coordination, full range of motion in all exercises.	Fair level of coordination, moderate range of motion.	Uneven coordination, limited range of motion.
<i>Mental/Emotional</i>			
Energy	Very positive attitude, no visible stress responses.	Neutral attitude, occasional stress responses.	Negative attitude, frequent stress responses.
Positive Mental States	Displayed 3-4 of the following: Peacefulness, happiness, relief, bliss.	Displayed 1-2 positive states of mind.	Displayed 0-1 positive states of mind.
<i>Subtle</i>			
Connection	High level of adaptation and integration. Very relaxed while meditating.	Moderate level of adaptation and integration. Somewhat relaxed in meditation.	Low level of adaptation and integration. Visibly tense while meditating.
Presence	Highly attentive, engaged, and focused.	Somewhat attentive and engaged. Lost focus occasionally.	Low level of attention and engagement. Was easily distracted.

Visibly aware of your breath.  
Suggestive in + out of your nose.  
N/A  
N/A

Fantastic job! Your ability to integrate this new movement vocabulary in a short time is impressive!

## Kaleidoscopic Katas

### Researcher Post Study Rubric

Dancer: Jaqueline

Holistic Health	Mastery	Proficient	Novice
<b>Physical</b>			
Energy	High energy, no limitations due to pain responses.	Moderate energy, some limitations due to pain responses.	Low energy, very limited due to pain responses.
Execution	Fluid coordination, full range of motion in all exercises.	Fair level of coordination, moderate range of motion.	Uneven coordination, limited range of motion.
<b>Mental/Emotional</b>			
Energy	Very positive attitude, no visible stress responses.	Neutral attitude, occasional stress responses.	Negative attitude, frequent stress responses.
Positive Mental States	Displayed 3-4 of the following: Peacefulness, happiness, relief, bliss.	Displayed 1-2 positive states of mind.	Displayed 0-1 positive states of mind.
<b>Subtle</b>			
Connection	High level of adaptation and integration. Very relaxed while meditating.	Moderate level of adaptation and integration. Somewhat relaxed in meditation.	Low level of adaptation and integration. Visibly tense while meditating.
Presence	Highly attentive, engaged, and focused.	Somewhat attentive and engaged. Lost focus occasionally.	Low level of attention and engagement. Was easily distracted.

Congratulations on performing  
 the short form w/o a  
 video recording or any assistance!  
 Major accomplishment!

## Kalcidoscopic Katas

### Researcher Post Study Rubric

Dancer: Louisa

Holistic Health	Mastery	Proficient	Novice
<i>Physical</i>			
Energy	High energy, no limitations due to pain responses.	Moderate energy, some limitations due to pain responses.	Low energy, very limited due to pain responses.
Execution	Fluid coordination, full range of motion in all exercises.	Fair level of coordination, moderate range of motion.	Uneven coordination, limited range of motion.
<i>Mental/Emotional</i>			
Energy	Very positive attitude, no visible stress responses.	Neutral attitude, occasional stress responses.	Negative attitude, frequent stress responses.
Positive Mental States	Displayed 3-4 of the following: Peacefulness, happiness, relief, bliss.	Displayed 1-2 positive states of mind.	Displayed 0-1 positive states of mind.
<i>Subtle</i>			
Connection	High level of adaptation and integration. Very relaxed while meditating.	Moderate level of adaptation and integration. Somewhat relaxed in meditation.	Low level of adaptation and integration. Visibly tense while meditating.
Presence	Highly attentive, engaged, and focused.	Somewhat attentive and engaged. Lost focus occasionally.	Low level of attention and engagement. Was easily distracted.

N/A

N/A

Very impressed by your ability to "flow" with the sequence. You made some excellent modification choices and nailed the last balance pose!



## Exit Survey

**Physical**

Please consider the state of your physical energy level.

	Low	Average	High
Before the workshop:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
During the workshop:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After the workshop:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please assess your overall pain level.

	Non-Existent	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
Before the workshop:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
During the workshop:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After the workshop:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please rate your flexibility level.

	Low	Average	High
Before the workshop:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
During the workshop:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After the workshop:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

While participating in the workshop, did you experience any of the following physical sensations:

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Warmth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tingling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Swelling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Numbness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please explain any physical changes or sensations that you may have experienced.

Please assess your overall anxiety level:

	Low	Average	High
Before the workshop:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
During the workshop:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After the workshop:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please assess your overall depression level:

	Low	Average	High
Before the workshop:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
During the workshop:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After the workshop:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

While participating in the workshop did you experience any of the following states of mind:

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Peacefulness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Happiness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relief	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bliss	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please explain any mental/emotional changes or experiences.

### ASC

Were you able to accomplish your personal goal for the workshop? Please explain:

Did this workshop offer enough of a challenge for you?

Yes, I felt challenged in ways that supported my growth.

Somewhat, although I would have liked more of a challenge.

No, I did not feel challenged at all.

During the course of attending the workshop, how easy was it to navigate your day-to-day activities?

Very easy, a seamless experience

Average, encountered some minor obstacles

Difficult, had significant challenges

What was your awareness of time while participating in the workshop?

Time seemed to move quickly; I did not focus on the clock.

Time moved at an average speed; I looked at the clock occasionally.

Time moved slowly; I looked at the clock frequently.

On a scale of 0-10, what was your level of enjoyment throughout the workshop?

Low											High
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

What was your comfort level while learning new materials?

Low											High
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

What was your level of engagement while participating in the workshop?

Low											High
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10