

Chapter 10

A Qualitative Study on Yoga Practice in Quality of Labor Life

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10.1 Quality of Life

Although the interest in quality of life goes a long way back in time, its conception and systematic and scientific assessment are relatively recent; it became a popular idea in the 1960s and is, nowadays, a widely used concept in different spheres.

Tonon (2007) considers that the study of quality of life refers to the material and psychosocial environment, thus acknowledging two spheres of wellbeing: social and psychological, the latter corresponding with people's experience and the assessment they make of their own situations; this includes positive and/or negative outlooks and a global vision of their lives i.e. vital satisfaction. The social agents make general assessments of their lives, taking different aspects of them into consideration.

Dennis et al. (1994) sustain that the research focuses on quality of life may be classified into two types: a) quantitative focal points, which seek to operationalize quality of life through the study of different indicators and b) the qualitative ones, which adopt the attitude of listening to the subjects (Gómez Vela 2000). According to Veenhoven (1994), quality of life involves two meanings: (1) the presence of conditions considered indispensable to a good life and (2) the actual practice of good living, the latter being the one which submits the consideration of factors which largely depend on the subjects' actions and perceptions of their own lives.

García Martín (2002) points out that this objective-subjective dimensional differentiation has brought about an intensification of individual analysis as opposed

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to the social or structural ones, thus allowing an approach on the subjective dimension of human welfare by laying emphasis on internal components.

According to Diener and Diener (1995), we may assert that the concepts of welfare may be grouped into three categories: (1) which describes welfare as the individuals' appraisal of their own lives in positive terms ("satisfaction with life"), (2) which has a bearing on the superiority of positive feelings or affection over negative ones, and (3) the closest to philosophical-religious questions, which considers happiness as a virtue or grace—definitions derived from this perspective may be considered normative (García Martín 2002). Petito and Cummins (2000) uphold a perspective centered in the individuals, thus considering welfare in terms of individual assessment on their quality of life, which has two components: satisfaction with life—implying a cognitive assessment—, and a component of affection, which involves feelings and moods.

10.2 Work and Quality of Labor Life

León Palacios (2003) expounds that the combination of capitalist restructuring and information technologies have direct effects on the international division of labor, the circulation of financial capital, and industry, thus implying changes in the social order. This is occurring in an asymmetrically inter-dependent world, revolving round Europe, the United States, and Asia, polarized by an axis that divides wealthy regions with high information rates, from indigent regions—socially impoverished and with devaluated economies. In such a setting regarding Latin-America, Rendón and Salas (2000) have established the following tendencies in the labor market: (a) plain unemployment, loss of warranties derived from seniority and empirical knowledge, flexibilization, increase in the number of employed family members, feminization, reduction of the state and employers' contributions to social security, increasingly precarious labor conditions, decentralization of collective bargaining, etc.

Castel (1995), on the other hand, adopts a posture regarding the individuals' constitution through the emergence and transformation of problem fields and devices which define the base of the modern man's individuality. His view is directed to that increasingly fragile base, i.e., to the loss of affiliation processes and their vulnerable zones. He focuses on a contemporary social process with which most post-industrial societies are faced: the growth of unemployment together with a general weakening of labor conditions and protection of the laborers, underlining its effect on the construction of the individuals' social support.

In this context, he considers centralizing the analysis of the existence or non-existence of a relationship between individuals and their work, for he does not conceive work as a technical relationship involving production, but as a privileged support which allows a subscription to the social structure. He considers the existence of a profound correlation between the position occupied by individuals in the social division of labor—as well as their participation in socialization networks, and the

protection systems to safeguard them, when faced with existential contingencies. According to this author, the individuals' protective layers may be metaphorically considered as social cohesion zones. Thus, a solid insertion in the labor networks, where they may enjoy relative security in terms of salary and health insurance, among other aspects, implies situating the individuals in an integration zone while, an insertion in weak labor networks would, on the contrary, derive in a process of social vulnerability.

He claims that individuals need to occupy a certain space in society in order to develop their capacity to become individuals (Castel and Haroche 2003) which is directly linked to the processes of cohesion and social vulnerability, but also to the social instances that allow the creation of spaces for the individuals' support.

Proceeding with Castel's considerations, we coincide with Martuccelli (2002), who believes that, though there is no denying the need for different resources, social rights and the access to certain protective institutions, the construction of modern individuals must contemplate that "their possibility to create themselves from the sphere of sense production should not be overlooked for one moment, by considering it, inevitably, anchored to a supportive base" (p. 96).

As to the Quality of Labor Life, Duro Martín (2002) points out that the workers' psychological labor welfare and their mental health at work are personal consequences of their work, of their subjective experience, and that they affect the workers' own organization and family life. Moreover, his writings have allowed us to verify the following: (a) the existence of a mixture of both types of consequents, as shown in various studies on the different aspects of the workers' psychological welfare and labor mental health, for instance: professional self-esteem and stress and/or burnout (Gil-Monte and Peiró 1997); on labor satisfaction, and anxiety, depression and irritability (Hackman and Oldham 1980); on excessive work and labor satisfaction, etc; (b) awareness of the existence of a certain amount of concealment and confusion among labor syndrome and psychological conditions, for instance: depression and burnout (Leiter and Durup 1994; Schaufeli and Enzmann 1998), stress and burnout (Mearns and Cain 2003), etc., and (c) that the workers' psychological welfare and labor mental health have a common background (for example, an adequate amount of work offers a psychological sense of wellbeing while excessive work may begin by deteriorating that sense of wellbeing and, eventually, damage the workers' labor mental health).

10.3 Yoga

Yoga is considered to be what is popularly called Complementary or Alternative Medicine. Bowling (2010) points out that in the field of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM, English acronym/MCA, Spanish acronym) different terms are used. A broader one is "non-conventional medicine", alluding to therapies which are not normally taught in medical school, or not available in hospitals. The terms "complementary" and "alternative" refer to the way in which the therapies are

applied: complementary therapies are applied together with conventional medicine; while alternative therapies actually replace conventional medicine.

These medical practices are defined, in connection with conventional medicine. An example of this is the fact that they are defined by the U.S. National Health Institutes as: *“healing practices [...] which differ from the politically predominant health system in a particular society [...] within a certain historical period”*. (p. 4). These techniques are diversely found in countries all over the world (OMS/WHO 2002). On the other hand, within that denomination (MCA/CAM, also generally associated to Traditional Medicine, according to OMS/WHO 2002) numerous practices are included: non-medicated therapies (yoga, acupuncture, manual therapies, Gigong, Tai ji, thermal therapy, and other physical and mental therapies), or therapies requiring medication (using medicines obtained from herbs, animal and/or mineral parts) (OMS/WHO 2002).

The root of the word “yoga” is “juj” (to bind, oppress, yoke, etc.). The actual term Yoga is used to designate “all ascetic techniques and any other method of meditation” (Eliade 1998, p. 18), though classical Yoga exists; a philosophical system (“darsana”, a system of coherent assertions extended to human experience, which it endeavours to interpret as a whole, with the intention of delivering men from ignorance) expounded by Patanjali in his treatise Yoga-Sutra, and other innumerable popular forms. Yoga is one of the six orthodox Indian philosophical systems, and the best known in the Western World, by its formulation of Patanjali.

One of the features of Yoga, apart from its practical aspect, is its initiation structure, since it is not only learnt from a teacher (guru). In India, all philosophical systems are taught by teachers, which confers them such character, for initiations are transmitted orally, “from mouth to ear”. Nevertheless, Yoga further adds the fact that the yogi begins by abandoning the profane world (family, society) and devoting himself to successively overcoming the conduct and values inherent to human conduct, through their guru. Thus, it may be said to imply a form of death (of a manner), and the rebirth (of another being: liberation) (Eliade 1988).

Yoga, the philosophical system, is very similar to another Indian philosophical system, actually considered by Zimmer (1979) as two aspects of the same discipline. While Samkhya upholds a theoretical exposition of human nature—including an enumeration and definition of its elements, analyzing the way in which they collaborate in the binding state (Bandha) and describing its state of liberation (moksha), Yoga concretely approaches the dynamics of the separation process and points out the liberation practices. Although it is believed that the fundamentals of Samkhya and Yoga are extremely ancient, they were not found in orthodox Indian texts until a relatively late date (Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita), in which they are found harmonized with Vedic philosophy (Zimmer 1979).

In the aforementioned texts of Yoga Sutra—which date is controversial, given the fact that the first three books might date back to the second century B.C., the fourth one seems to have appeared later, probably in the fifth century, according to Zimmer (1979)—, Patanjali, the autor refers to the eight step path of Yoga (or “Ashtanga Yoga”, in Sanskrit), namely: (1) Yama (Sanskrit term which alludes to

moral restrictions, abstention and self-restriction), (2) Niyama (Sanskrit term for observances, values and precepts), (3) Asana (Sanskrit term to designate postures) (4) Pranayama (Sanskrit term which refers to breathing/energy regulation), (5) Pratyahara (Sanskrit term which alludes to the retraction of the senses), (6) Dharana (Sanskrit term referred to concentration), (7) Dhyana (Sanskrit term alluding to meditation, to contemplation) y (8) Samadhaya (Sanskrit term which alludes to the absorption of conscience within the self, deep meditation, super conscience) (Iyengar 2002, pp. 31–32, pp. 140–142).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Hatha Yoga (Hathayoga, in Sanskrit) is one of the major Yoga systems and the most widely spread in Western practices, its best known text being Hatha Yoga Pradipika (Svatmarama 2002). The practice of Hatha Yoga is considered to bring equilibrium and balance on solar and lunar energies –Ha means “sun” and Tha means “moon”, in Sanskrit- (Maheshwarananda 2009).

10.4 Disquiet and Self-Care/Self-Practice

Foucault (1987) points out the precept that looking after oneself is imperative to different doctrines, that it has impregnated ways of living, and developed in the procedures and practices which are being developed and taught; “it has, thus, constituted a social practice, giving way to inter-individual relations, exchange and communication, and even to institutions; it has, finally, generated a certain mode of learning and the elaboration of a certain knowledge” (p. 43).

In his view, self-care is understood as a set of practices through which a subject establishes a certain relationship with him/herself and, thus, becomes subject of his/her own actions (Chirolla 2007). This self-care implies self knowledge (Robbins 2007, quoted in Garcés Giraldo and Giraldo Zuluaga 2013), is directed to the soul, but it involves the body in its infinite details, and constitutes a preparation for a complete fulfilment in life (Giraldo 2008).

Lanz (2012) points out that, according to Foucault, self-care comprises three fundamental aspects: (1) an attitude of respect for oneself, for others, and for the world, (2) a particular attention, a view from the outside to the inside, focused on one’s thoughts. It is an outlook of the practice of subjectivity, (3) it names a series of actions, actions which are carried out by oneself, through which one takes charge of oneself and is transformed. Self-care also requires a reflective movement about oneself, a permanent review of the ways in which one has sought to orient one’s conduct, examining it in order to improve it. Thus, the techniques which allow us such procedure are known as technologies of the “self”:

They allow individuals to carry out (on their own accord, or with the help of others), a certain number of operations on their bodies and souls, thoughts, behavior, or any other aspect of their being, thus achieving a transformation within themselves in order to reach a state of happiness, purity, wisdom, or immortality (Foucault 1990, p. 48).

He proposes four principal types among these technologies and points out that each one represents a matrix of practical reasoning: (1) technologies of production, which allow us to produce and transform things, (2) technologies of sign systems, which allow us to use signs or significations; (3) technologies of power, which determine the individuals' behavior, submitting them to certain ends and (4) technologies of the Self, that allow subjects to do a certain number of operations on their bodies and souls, or any other aspect of their being, thus achieving a transformation within themselves in order to reach a state of happiness, wisdom, or immortality (Foucault 1990).

Sáenz Obregón (s./f.- no date) points out that these practices stem from the individuals' dissatisfaction with their present state and their quest for transformation, with an underlying knowledge-power relation, at the point of relating to their own knowledge and that of others. Britos (2005) claims that these self practices delimit self knowledge within a series of practices and physical, behavioral, and meditation exercises aimed at the construction of a better existence and the pursuit of happiness. Along with that, Sossa Rojas (2010) adds that such instruction on living techniques will allow, or contribute to finding the truth, the personal truth, and the transformation of subjectivity. Thus, resorting to Yoga, as a practice itself, is a way of considering it a voluntary practice through which those who practice it act upon themselves in order to achieve a transformation.

Whether individual or collective, the practices in question are social practices (Foucault 1994) and they, therefore, have varied according to the historical contexts in which they were carried out, from ancient times up to the present. Considering the present time, Ravettino (2008) believes that there is an obsession with the body, which has surpassed bodily superficiality, since not only is it a quest for adequate weight and appearance but also for body welfare, through the advent of health prevention practices. Bauman (2006, quoted in Ravettino 2008) adds that, in consumerist societies, the subjects' obsession with health and personal care becomes increasingly outstanding, "being fit". Thus, this state of "feeling better" is reflected, not only in eating habits but also in physical training and leisure activities. Moreover, in this context, physical activity is raging among major organizations, seeking to reduce absenteeism and boosting the employees' performance; several Argentine firms are offering their staff a variety of physical activities during labor time (or out of schedule, on the premises). This is the echo of a phenomenon originated in the United States, following directions emanated from the main offices.

Regarding choices, interests, and motivations, Lewin (1939), considers, from the view-point of Psychology, that the subjects' aims and needs are dynamizing elements in their behavior while, according to Nuttin (1985), there is the so-called "tendency towards self-fulfilment", an inner force that urges the subjects to fulfil their potentialities and carry out their projects, in a process of unity and differentiation between what they wish to become and the image they have of the environment. In this respect, D'angelo (2013), point out the existence of an orientation towards self-fulfillment which urges the subjects to develop their essential potentialities, values and interests, in the context of their social activities.

10.5 The Body as a Semantic Vector

According to Le Breton (2002), the body is the semantic vector through which the evidence of the actors' social relationship with the world is constructed, and is responsible for the generation and propagation of "the significations that constitute the basis of an individual and collective existence. It is the axis of their relationship with the world, the place and the time in which existence becomes part of the actors' flesh as a result of their singular outlook on it" (pp. 7–8). It is through their corporeal condition that the subjects transform the world into a familiar and coherent fabric, available both for action and comprehension. "Both by emitting and receiving, the body produces continuous sense, thus, men are actively inserted in a given social and cultural space." (p. 8). Social order filters through their body, through the education they have received, identifications of the subject, cultural transformations in their life-styles, etc.

The representations of the body are a function of the representation of people and both are inserted in the world's vision of the community/group they belong to. The modern conception of the body regards men as being separate from the cosmos, from other men, and from themselves. Yet, there are societies in which such separation does not exist, and the body is inscribed in a complex network of correspondence—between body and cosmos—i.e. the body and its representations, knowledge systems it is referred to, etc., alter from one society to another. It is important to highlight that, in our societies, there are various body models associated to different medical practices (biomedical formal and dominant cognizance, parallel or popular medical practices, etc.). "In the foundations of all social practices, as a privileged mediator and pivot of human presence, the body is situated at the crossroads of all cultural instances; it is the supreme imputation point in the symbolic field". (p. 32). Thus, it is essential to consider the fact that the body does not exist in its natural shape, it is always inserted in a web of sense i.e., the body is construed as a base of values. "The body is a metaphor of the social aspect, and the latter is a metaphor of the body". (p. 73).

10.6 Yoga and Quality of Life

The studies on quality of life are numerous and embrace different aspects. Quality of life studies and alternative or complementary techniques are, generally, approached from a medical perspective (Taylor 2012; Wells et al. 2007; Matthees et al. 2001; Astin 1998).

As to the quality of labor life, Duro Martín (2002) considers that the workers' psychological labor welfare and their mental health in the same context are the personal consequences of work; they constitute its subjective experience, and have certain effects on the actual organization (effects on productivity, direct and indirect costs) and on the workers' families (break-ups, other conflicts, etc.). He further adds

that the different approaches on workers' psychological welfare are, basically, made in the field of study on quality of labor life, considering different aspects, such as: labor satisfaction (Bravo et al. 1996); labor satisfaction, welfare and quality of life (Requena 2000), absenteeism (Burton et al. 2002; Harrison and Martocchio 1998); person-environment adjustment (Kahn and Boysiére 1992); task contents (Karasek et al. 1998), etc. Parallel to this, the approaches on workers' psychological welfare, in broader terms, and the themes of labor mental health, have mostly been dealt with in studies on social psychology applied to labor health; for instance, in studies on stress (Spielberger et al. 2003), burnout or syndrome of being burnt out by work (Bakker et al. 2002), labor harassment or mobbing (González de Rivera 2002), sexual harassment at work (Harned et al. 2002), and other more general psychological disorders, and a diversity of symptoms, namely, studies on: depression, anxiety, alcohol consumption, somehow, associated to work.

Among the studies on the use of alternative and/or complementary techniques in the work place, Smith (2005) concluded that the employees of very small firms are more open to the use of those techniques, in connection with labor induced stress and fatigue. Halpern (2011); Kellner et al. (2002); Coulter and Willis (2004), among others, consider that the use of "alternative techniques" has become common in the Western World, Yoga being one of the best known and more widely used, including a diversity of physical practices (postures or asanas, breathing exercises, relaxation and meditation) as well as philosophical formulations on reality and the life styles derived from it.

There are several studies on the effect of the different meditation techniques which, though close to the yoga practice are not classified as forming part of it, such as Transcendental Meditation (MT)TM (Ospina et al. 2007), Buddhist Zeb Meditation (Chiesa 2009; Chiesa and Serretti 2010; Ospina et al. 2007), Vipassana meditation (Chiesa and Serretti 2010; Chiesa and Serretti 2009), and several other contemporary forms of meditation (Ospina et al. 2007; Chiesa and Serretti 2009). There are also studies on the effects of non-yoga contemporary relaxation techniques, which share certain similarities with Yoga techniques (Carlson and Hoyle 1993), on "stretching" (Thacker et al. 2004; Herbert and Gabriel 2002; Andersen 2005; Shrier 2004), and on isometric training techniques (Millar et al. 2007; Peters et al. 2006; Taylor et al. 2003).

There are also numerous studies on the effects of Yoga practice, though varying in quality, method, and population. Most of them apply protocols which incorporate, at least, two elements of Yoga practice (such as, e.g. asana and relaxation, or pranayama and meditation), while a few have settled on the effects of a single Yoga practice (asana, pranayama, relaxation or meditation).

Different research papers have demonstrated the beneficial effects of Yoga practice on sleep disorders and insomnia (Shannahoff-Khalsa 2004, 2006; Manjunath and Telles 2005; Cohen et al. 2004; Halpern 2011, Chen et al. 2008, 2009, 2010; Patra and Telles 2009, 2010; Telles et al. 2000, etc.). There are also studies on the effect of Yoga practice on depression—which are said to have obtained seemingly positive results—though further research is required, considering the heterogeneity of the protocols used and the quality of the methodology (Pilkington

et al. 2005-idea shared by Uebelacker et al. 2010). On the other hand, few studies have been made on the effect of those practices on anxiety and anxiety disorders, though they have been proved effective, while requiring more research on the topic. (Kirkwood et al. 2005).

A research on practices of the Iyengar Yoga method to reduce stress showed significant improvements over the measuring of self-perceived stress and indicators of physical welfare (Michalsen et al. 2005). On the other hand, the studies on the effects of Yoga practices on muscular-skeletal pain, proved that the achievement of pain reduction and general physical improvement (Raub 2002; Sherman et al. 2005; John et al. 2007; Garfinkel et al. 1994; Kolasinski et al. 2005, etc.) moreover, Yoga practice has been shown to reduce factors of risk in connection to chronic diseases, including blood pressure, cholesterol, triglyceric acid, oxidative stress, glucose and clotting factors (Yang 2007; Innes et al. 2005; Innes and Vincent 2007, etc).

The approach on the effects of Yoga on the cardio-respiratory function offers several relevant studies that show significant improvement in different parameters which include the lung function, improvement in the work average, and in physical exercise as well as a reduction in oxygen consumption. Some studies even suggest that these practices may cause significant improvement in chronic asthma symptoms and in bronchitis. (Raub 2002). In this connection, the research on the scope of Pranayama practice makes reference to its beneficial effects in the reduction of anxiety, stress, and depression; it further shows improvements in the use of oxygen and in immune system markers, reduction of blood pressure, etc. (Brown and Gerbarg 2005a, b; Janakiramaiah et al. 2000; Shannahoff-Khalsa 1993; Kjellgren et al. 2007; Sharma et al. 2008; Raju et al. 1994; Pramanik et al. 2009, etc.)

Other studies focus on the effects of non-yoga stretching, and to the effect of the cycles of sometric effort and rest periods which, owing to their similarities with Asana practices, may be considered to have equivalent results (Herbert and Gabriel 2002; Thacker et al. 2004; Andersen 2005, etc.). The aforementioned studies indicate that stretching does not necessarily reduce the risk of wounds, but may contribute to shorten their period of recovery, reduce blood pressure, etc.

Regarding the scope of meditation practices, Yoga Nidra (Yoga dream) has been instrumental in the studies that were carried out, and it has been attributed improvements in psychological and physiological level measuring including stress, anxiety, and self-assessed welfare, among others. (Pritchard et al. 2010; Kamakhya 2004; Vempati and Telles 2002; Lou et al. 1999; Amita et al. 2009, etc.).

There are further studies which consider the effects of Yoga practice on the needs of senior adults (Krucoff et al. 2010; Manjunath and Telles 2005; SAY 2010, etc.), while a few other works have compared the effects of Yoga practice to that of non-Yoga practices (Streeter et al. 2010; Ross and Thomas 2010).

In the same field of work, a group of researchers from Ohio University, authors of an abridged version of Yoga practice, applied it to a study made on participant members of weekly group gatherings held in the lunch hour at work, during which meditation and Yoga practice were carried out on the premises and, after six weeks' practice, they (among other things) were able to report an increased awareness of the participants regarding external stress factors; a sense of relief of the stress caused by

events in their lives; and a reduction in sleeping disorders, as compared to the members of the control group that did not take part in the experiment (Klatt et al. 2009).

The Supervising Office of Traditional Medicine and Intercultural Development, Secretary of Health, Mexico 2007, (In Spanish: Dirección de Medicina Tradicional y Desarrollo Intercultural, Dirección General de Planeación y Desarrollo en Salud, Secretaría de Salud de México 2007) highlights the contributions of Yoga to its diagnosis made by the different clinical therapeutic models for diabetes mellitus. While in Brazil, Dantas de Carvalho and da Silva Correia (2011) studied the beneficial effects of Yoga in women undergoing the process of counteracting the habituation effects of Diazepam, certifying that the Yoga practices allowed a more accurate self-perception in the women included in their study by producing awareness of their dependence on that medicine; furthermore, they observed a significant reduction, and even total abstention, in the use of the aforementioned tranquilizer.

Fajardo Pulido (2009) considers that Yoga practice in Bogotá (Colombia) conceives a particular vision of the body which promotes a holistic mode of existence within the logics of a spiritual experience, materialized in individual bodies. He claims that oriental spirituality entails “new forms” of experiencing, both of health and illness, which is having a commercial repercussion among complementary health service institutions and in urban Bogotá. Moreover, he believes that, to those who embrace the promise of a better life, the time devoted to weekly Yoga practice is no longer a mere corporeal experience but rather a lifestyle, through a body in permanent construction in different strata, thus transforming their vision of the world. Also in Colombia, Ramírez Suárez (2011) focuses on Yoga as a practice of the self and according to his study the people who practice it belong to the high and high middle class from the city, which possesses the economic and socio-cultural means to gain access to the aforementioned practice. The reasons alleged for the practice of Yoga are: emotional crises, physical disquiet produced by illness; or sheer interest in leading a healthy life, the quest for a treatment to combat the stress and anxiety caused by the hustle and bustle of city life. On the other hand, the incorporation of Yoga practice as a life style varies according to the degree of involvement in the practice, the institutional commitment with the practice centers, and the aims of those who practise it.

Araiza Díaz (2009), focuses on “learning” and “being” through Yoga practice, highlighting the teacher-disciple relationship in Yoga and recovering, among other things, through Foucault (2004), the other kind of teacher who once existed in the Western World, committed to cultivating the self, and the technologies of “being” i.e. not only implying self-knowledge but also self-care.

On the other hand, Ravettino (2008) relates the practice of certain disciplines, such as Yoga, with a “light” life-style, and points out that physical activity in the workplace is becoming increasingly popular among major organizations. This is reflected in the offer of gym and relaxation activities made to employees by several Argentine firms, in labor hours, in the hope of reducing absenteeism and stimulating higher performance. He further adds that, around 2003, Argentine firms began to develop these programs, following the tendency of the United States.

Different authors analyze the arrival and development of Yoga practice in Argentina, such as Saizar (2006, 2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2011); Sarudiansky and Saizar (2007); Giménez y Saizar (2011); D’angelo (2012, 2013) and Viotti (2010).

To conclude, we agree with Chakraborty (1986) who believes that the path towards the “will-to-yoga” constitutes a desirable choice in the enhancement of quality of labor life.

10.7 Yoga and its Significance to Quality of Life, in our Study

The study in question was developed from a qualitative perspective, and was carried out through semistructured interviews of 20 people, females and males between 21 and 65 years old, who practice Yoga, and reside in Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, República Argentina, analyzed with Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006).

Regarding the motives which have led the interviewed subjects to practice Yoga are, in some cases, stimulated by someone close (their couple, for instance). Such is the case of one of the interviewed subjects, a 40 year old woman: “(Yoga) wouldn’t have entered my life if it hadn’t been for C. her husband [due to his health problem]” (female, 40 years old).

Self disquiet is also reflected in the fact that it attracts others who are in a personal pursuit, as expressed by another interviewed subject (female, 41 years old):

Look, it was an inner search. I really needed something for my soul. I got pregnant with S. and, at that moment, my head began to spin, maybe due to the responsibility it represented, because it was something I couldn’t control, because we can’t control Nature, and then, well, I was really afraid and felt insecure, though we had really wanted this baby. I began to perceive a lot of things that I must have had bottled up inside, and I needed peace and a reconnection with myself and then, well, a lady I happened to know, who practiced Reiki, said, “ Why don’t you come and give it a try?”, and that’s how I started with G. [Yoga instructor]...

In some cases, disquiet of the self, may be rooted in health issues, leading to the development of the Yoga practice by medical prescription, or recommendations made by family or friends. Such is the case of another interviewed subject (male, 55 years old), who comments:

On June 29, 2009 I had a heart attack, followed by heart failure, on that same night,; in September of that same year they, well, they tried to do something but, well, they couldn’t because my heart was too weak, in fact only 60% is functioning properly, to this day. In September they inserted three stents, but this wasn’t enough and, in February 2010, I was operated on. The operation lasted eight hours, my heart was artificially stopped, and I’ve got five by-pass operations; I’m technically disabled, but there was nothing else they could do and, thankfully, I’m perfect now. When I returned home, a friend of mine (without asking for my opinión), introduced me to a Yoga teacher called G., he himself paid the fees for the first month’s classes, and here I am.

Another interviewed subject (male, 44 years old) suffering from ankylosing spondylitis, begins a quest for different activities, which he carries out with his couple.

Regarding the personal outlook on Yoga (exclusively as a technique, or as a philosophical-practical system), it may be pointed out that Foucault, upholds that

self care may be understood as set of practices through which an individual establishes a certain relationship with himself and, in that relationship, he becomes the subject of his own actions (Chirolla 2007). Foucault states that one can not take care of oneself if one does not know oneself enough. Britos (2005) adds that self care implies self knowledge, but also the knowledge of rules of behaviour or principles embodying truths and prescriptions. Thus, by taking care of oneself would involve being equipped with those truths.

In this connection, an interviewed 46 year old male, points out:

Of course, this impact from the point of view of values and all that, somehow, comes later; one's first perception is the impact on the body, isn't it? From the physical or mental points of view, depending on one's interests, what one feels should be deepened in order to reach those values; I do it from both points of view, don't I? But [...] from both, yes from both, I also practice meditation, I then do something for my spirit, to put it some way, I'm interested and I try to go deeper, yes, yes.,

According to Robbins, the care of the self involves knowledge of the self, the inevitable relationship between practice and learning, for there is a strong bond between knowledge and action, whether as a principle to regulate action, as an aim to be achieved through it, or as a process through which it is made manifest (Robbins 2007, quoted in Garcés Giraldo and Giraldo Zuluaga 2013). Giraldo, on the other hand, adds that self care aims at the soul and it is a way of preparing oneself for a complete fulfilment of life (Giraldo 2008). In that sense, in some cases, this self care reflects the different practices developed by the subject. Such is the case of 42 year old interviewed male, who explains that he seizes the practical aspect of Yoga and the values transmitted by his instructor, G. and, in general lines, anything that may complement his own Buddhist practice.

The body appears as a vector which produces a sense that enhances the subject's active social and cultural insertion; and, in this regard, a 42 year old female points out:

Yes...I don't know, whether to consider it as a phylophony, let's say, to which I strictly respond as a religión; I simply put into practice some of the principles, some of the values of Yoga which I agree on, er, yes, I believe it spreads, not as a sports practice, it isn't a mere sports practice, but something, I insist, that began as something for the body, to be able to relax, to sleep better, but I'm beginning to find, somehow in spite of myself, I'm beginning to find a lot of things which involve a closeness to spiritual life [...] For instance, unattachment, working on the notion of unattachment, beginning to work on the idea of non-violence, starting by the person itself, that is, starting by oneself, by us; beginning to enjoy and concentrate on "here and now", er, well, on joy, that state of joy or samadhi... isn't it? Erm, being somehow conscious and active because one is sometimes prejudiced into believing that it's only a relaxation practice, while it really involves great consciousness of our bodies or of the state we're in, don't you think? We must respect all that [...] Yes, yes, I believe that it's like a whole exercise, I mean, like beginning to work on certain things such as unattachment, for instance. Life catches hold of you, it makes you grasping, so to speak. Er, I believe it's all about working, it requires work, not hard labor, but pleasant work, a process that is gradually incorporated.

Regarding quality of life in general and quality of labor life, previous to the practice of Yoga, and on its initiation, it should be remembered that Foucault highlights that self care comprises three basic aspects: firstly, that it is an attitude of self respect, of

respect for others, and for the world in general; secondly, that it is a certain manner of attention, an outlook; and thirdly, that the notion of self care designates a series of actions which are exercised over oneself, actions which lead to taking charge of one's self and transforming it.

Care for others, explicit in actions, presumes ethical care of oneself. The body, as a vector which connects material practice to the other scopes of Yoga, also expresses an interrelation with others (made evident in stress, pressure, etc.), as inferred from the following interview with a 37 year old woman:

Well, er, before I began to practise Yoga, my physical body and my mental body, were ravaged by stress, you see? They were my own pressures, let's say, because I can't very well say that they were external issues related to labor achievement, and it was a kind of mandate imposed by reality, a mandate that I had received, and I think that what Yoga did was help me break with all that, just that really, it changed my approach to labor, I now work fewer hours...

Another woman we interviewed highlights that Yoga practice elicits order:

I think it has a lot to do with temperaments and the extent of the effects of these practices. I experience great serenity but...it's difficult, you see...how, how...to express what really transmits so much serenity but, well, I'm a highly strung person, therefore, very hyperactive, very anxious, and with a perfectionist streak, so er...there are moments, when I feel it's doing me good, I complete the practice, but later on, if this is projected to calm me down a second time, no, I don't think it's possible, ha, ha [...]. I think that what is useful to me—I'm a devoted student and, more so in my "nest" within my structure—but what I've noticed is that I need daily practice, discipline, but I'm not disciplined myself. I notice that I've maybe become more organized; it seems that the practice has brought order into certain aspects one doesn't always have an eye on, such as complying with college, with work, with doing things right, and showing this to the people involved. That are things which are personal so, in those aspects that are my own, like this question of discipline, though I find it hard, I've noticed small changes such as—since I like doing things properly—I've become more orderly.

A 52 year old woman we interviewed, on the other hand, talks about Yoga practice as evidence of self care, regarding oneself, regarding others, and the world in general:

Well, I should say that, after going through the Yoga experience, one becomes conscious not only of the body but also of the thought of where one's quest is oriented; through it I have incorporated something that I cannot learn from a book because it's a personal experience, there is energy in the group and this often helps, when one is lazy or whatever, there is interactive energy with the other members of the group; this also happens when I'm working in a team, but it doesn't when I'm working on my own, in my workshop, they're different things.[...]my interest was focused in incorporating that [group energy].

A 63 year old woman we interviewed, comments on Yoga practice as a source of embetterment, made evident in specific values:

They're two different worlds, you go in as one kind of person and end up being completely different [...]at least, you become acquainted with the reasoning of a spiritual person, with being a better person each day, with being proper, pleasant and, above all, a kind person.

Regarding the scope of Yoga practice in labor life, in the relation with the above mentioned, it should be remembered that the care for others, implicit in actions,

reflects ethical care of oneself. Britos (2005) acknowledges that self-care requires self-reflection, and questioning oneself to examine behavior in order to polish up its forms and procedures.

A 42 year old woman we interviewed points out the following:

What I can tell you is that, now I work on my own, I have clients who entrust me with their businesses, with their communications [...] All I can say, right now, is that I'm happy with my clients, happy because they're human and, by having that kind of clients, I have slowly ruled out others, you see?, the lazy, aggressive guys, competitive people. I said to myself, "As from today, I'm only working with people who make me happy!"[...] The others fell away and that's great, you see? [...] We all ended up hugging and kissing each other, they say I'm fantastic, but I know the clients I now have are amazing [...] They're the people I want to do business with, and if any of them tells me, "Look, Silvana, let's review the fees", still it's people I feel happy to work with [...] It's wonderful, because it's a job I love, it's something I want to go on doing and, apart from everything else, they're wholesome people.

In a further interview with a 41 year old woman, she says:

Yes, yes, I try to create an atmosphere; I've been working here for nine years, almost ten, and I try to have a wholesome atmosphere for everyone, so that we can live in harmony, have fun—since we have to spend ten hours cooped up in here —, at least, I try, I don't know. What is more, two of the girls who come here are also taking Yoga classes with G. [the instructor] [...] Yes, one of them is my boss and, what I mean is I try to show them that there are others.

It would be advisable to consider the development of self care relating others. It is necessary to take care of oneself by taking care of others. Thus, the so-called technologies of the self enable subjects to carry out (on their own or with the help of others) operations on their bodies and souls and behavior, in a process of transformation resulting in a state of happiness, wisdom, etc. (Foucault 1990). Thus, a 46 year old male expresses during an interview:

Yes. No, I'd say no to that[some element in Yoga practice in particular I use at work], basically in this question of achieving harmony, taking one's distance from certain things [...] give relative importance to things, you see?, but no, I don't practise breathing [...] I might, if my muscles are stiff at work, I try to divert my attention away from the muscle in question, or from the affected zone, and I attempt to practice breathing, visualization and [...] [it's a kind of attitude towards life that begins to show ...] yes, yes, yes.

In coincidence with Daros (2007, quoted in Garcés Giraldo and Giraldo Zuluaga 2013), we say that the self develops technologies in its construction which do not exclude discipline, a rational use of pleasure, and the breeding of practices through which subjects preserve themselves. In connection with this, a 50 year old woman we interviewed points out:

I think it's a whole, but I also think that the beneficial effects one experiences in the long-run are, all in all, this single benefit, a certain emotional stability. Of course, in my case, it is complemented by meditation which also helps, doesn't it? Anyway, before starting with meditation you begin to feel the positive effects because that's the way Yoga works, from the physical point of view, I mean, posture, for asana is the physical part, but the result is gradually felt inside the body, through a better health state, higher spirits, er, intellectually perhaps even more; your mind becomes slightly more alert, more open, and then you begin to experience overall results, at all levels, you see? I believe that to be the greatest asset

of this practice, more than anything else [...including the question of work]. Yes, exactly, exactly, it offers you a lot and, I don't know, that's why I like it and that's why I do it.

Further, a 55 year old prosecuting attorney expresses in the interview:

Breathing. That's very useful to me at work; I practice deep breathing. Breathing is very useful to me and, er, when I'm anguished at having to rush from one place to another, I practice breathing, trying to take, to walk with, to keep my mind a blank and breathe, and that helps me a lot...

Inherent in self care, specific ethics underlie in coherence with caring for others. Thus, a 63 year old woman expresses in the interview:

The element Yoga gives you is, above all, "a sense of balance", so you're never going to have impulsive reactions, you're always going to have a smile on your lips or in your eyes, and that's going to help you interrelate with people and, besides, whoever wants to listen may do so when you say, "Hey! I'm practising Yoga". Don't miss it, because when you're doing something you want to share it with those around you, you want them to live it, to feel it...

10.8 To Conclude

In coincidence with Lewin (1939), the subjects' aims and needs make their behavior more dynamic. Thus, self care, expressed through Yoga practice, appears as a temporal space marker for those who indulge in it, and as a route which leads from a state of being un-well/organized/balanced to the contrary, with the addition of related values and consequent changes in relation to others, and to the world in general.

Among the reasons leading to the practice of Yoga—practice of the self, we may mention disquiet related to health problems, the stimulus of another signifier, a personal quest on the part of the interviewed subjects, and it may even be attributed to chance. Most of the subjects interviewed relate Yoga to something that exceeds the mere practice (restricted to the physical plane) thus, the body comes across as a full semantic vector, expressing values, changes in the relationships with others, and with the world in general. Those changes are reflected in quality of life, in general, and in quality of labor life in particular, and are explicitly acknowledged, in some cases, as being the source of improvement in productivity.

As aforementioned, the globalization context produces a pronounced circulation of people, goods, cultural elements, etc., related to improvements in means of transport and communications. The circulation of cultural elements of diverse origins is an ancient phenomenon, product of a convergence of cultures, thus generating not only circulation but also resemantization of the them, sometimes related to the development of the self; in other words, to quality of life itself, both general or explicit, particularly in the work place. Such is the case of Yoga, a system applied nowadays in different spheres including business organizations which offer it to their employees as an added benefit in their workplace. In any case, Yoga, as a practice of the self, entails inner changes, changes in relation to others and to the world in general.

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