

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF YOGA PARTICIPANTS ENROLLED
IN DIFFERENT YOGA STYLES

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ABSTRACT

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF YOGA PARTICIPANTS ENROLLED

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Yoga affects the lifestyles of many individuals ranging from child and teen to senior. The Yoga Centre studios in San Luis Obispo and Arroyo Grande provide a variety of classes conducive to the yoga practice for all ages and levels. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived benefits of participants enrolled in different styles of yoga at the Yoga Centre. The 163 participants completed the survey using self-administered and electronic questionnaires distributed in January of 2011. Stress relief was the highest perceived benefit. Most participants started yoga for health and fitness reasons and most were fearful of not doing it right or not being good enough when they began. Recommendations include spreading awareness of individual's initial fears of yoga and sharing the findings with the owners, staff, and instructors at the Yoga Centre so they can meet the physical and emotional needs of their members.

Keywords: perceived benefits, yoga styles, yoga philosophy

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Background of Study

Yoga has become more than an ancient institution. Yoga is now a highly practiced American form of exercise and has gained significant awareness and popularity within the last two decades. This momentum is largely due to the recognition and realization of the benefits of yoga. The National Center for Complementary & Alternative Medicine (NCCAM, 2009) gives an overview: “Yoga is a mind-body practice in Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) with origins in ancient Indian philosophy. The various styles of yoga that people use for health purposes typically combine physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation or relaxation” (p. 1). The NCCAM adds that the practice of yoga dates back 5,000 years and provides many physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual benefits for individuals that maintain a regular practice. Yoga combines meditation with motion, and for many people, yoga is good exercise. Herrick and Ainsworth (2000) continue, “The word yoga, derived from the Sanskrit language [the classical language of India]...often is defined as to join or yoke mind, body, and spirit...A well-rounded yoga practice may have benefits on structural, physiological, psychoemotional, and spiritual levels” (p. 32).

Providing varying types and degrees of perceived benefits that yoga users identify with is important to yoga studio owners and teachers. This information can help with methods directed at bringing in new people and keeping yoga participants in the system

long-term. One pair of yoga studio owners is the owners of the Yoga Centre studios in San Luis Obispo and Arroyo Grande, California. They provided subjects and assisted in data collection for this project. The overlying goal for the Yoga Centre owners is to attract as many individuals to the practice of yoga as possible. Yoga studio owners and teachers of the practice are knowledgeable about the possible mental benefits and stress relief after a yoga class, the increased muscle tone and flexibility from a regular yoga routine, individuals' potential spiritual connection when in yoga class, and the possible social aspect that comes from being involved in this activity. They also want to better understand individual's fears and issues with yoga so that they can address those concerns (T. Bobbitt, personal communication, October 2, 2010). This study will also potentially be useful to those interested in participating in yoga and those interested in the potential gains derived from yoga if they choose to partake in its practice.

Although some studies on yoga styles, philosophies, and benefits have been conducted, the overall body of research is lacking. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived benefits of participants enrolled in different styles of yoga at the Yoga Centre studios in San Luis Obispo and Arroyo Grande.

Review of Literature

Research for this review of literature was conducted at Robert E. Kennedy Library on the campus of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. In addition to books and other resources, the following online databases were utilized: Academic Search Elite, SPORTDiscus, PsycINFO, ERIC (Educational Resource

Information Center), and Proquest. This review of literature is organized into the following topic areas: yoga styles and philosophies and benefits of yoga.

Yoga styles and philosophies. Changes in philosophy and practice have molded and transformed yoga over the past thousand years. According to NCCAM (2009), yoga originally developed as a method of discipline and set of attitudes to help reach spiritual enlightenment. Traditionally, yoga was viewed and practiced in a religious manner. In recent years and especially in the United States, the religious element has been often left out or made less of a major focus (“Yoga gets,” 2003). The physical and health aspect now seem to take a larger role for the majority of yoga participants. This review of literature takes a closer look at yoga styles and philosophies.

A wide variety of literature that focuses on yoga trends in the United States all describe yoga in similar terms to Birdee et al. (2008):

The definition of yoga encompasses a variety of practices, which may include postures (asanas), breathing exercises (pranayama), meditation, mantras, lifestyle changes (e.g., diet, sleep, hygiene), spiritual beliefs, and/or rituals. Different yoga styles utilize and/or emphasize different practices reflecting the varied practice of yoga in India and the United States. (p. 1653)

Although the definition of yoga aligns with current yoga philosophies, yoga had a varied meaning and significance in the beginning. According to NCCAM (2009), the Yoga Sutras, was written more than 2,000 years ago, although yoga may have been practiced thousands of years prior. The Sutras outline eight limbs or foundations of yoga practice that serve as spiritual guidelines and include *yama* (moral behavior), *niyama* (healthy habits), *pranayama* (breathing exercises), *asana* (physical postures), *pratyahara* (sense

withdrawal), *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (contemplation), and *samadhi* (higher consciousness) (p. 1). The goal in the early forms of practice was spiritual enlightenment, and these guidelines helped to achieve that goal. NCCAM goes onto explain:

The numerous schools of yoga incorporate these eight limbs in varying proportions. Hatha yoga, the most commonly practiced in the United States and Europe, emphasizes two of the eight limbs: postures (*asanas*) and breathing exercises (*pranayama*). Some of the major styles of hatha yoga include Ananda, Anusara, Ashtanga, Bikram, Iyengar, Kripalu, Kundalini, and Viniyoga. (p. 2)

In further explanation, “Hatha is a Sanskrit word that literally means ‘sun’(ha) and “moon”(tha), broadly referring to the physical practices of yoga, including active and relaxing poses. Technically, all posture-based yoga can be labeled as hatha” (“Which yoga,” 2010, p. A6). Over time different styles have formed and for many the goals and desired outcomes have been altered. “...15 million Americans do yoga, and 35 million plan to try it within the year” (“Yoga gets,” 2003, p. 4) and “75% of all American gyms now offer yoga classes” (“Good for,” 2008, p. 6). The earlier traditions and foundations of the practice and the philosophy of yoga are certain to be carried through its growth and popularity. Associated with that, change and variations are inevitable.

It is important to know that with different styles and different personal needs outcomes of each practice vary. The focus may be on stretching, strength-building positions, balancing the mind and body, concentration on breathing, or a mixture of practices. The class may be a blend of styles. Before describing some of the most practiced yoga styles, it is important to understand that in class it is encouraged to listen to the body as it is each individual’s own practice. While in practice, individuals remove

any outside thoughts from the mind. Variations are also available for health conditions, which is important knowledge for an instructor (“Yoga gets,” 2003).

Yoga’s increased popularity is partly due to how it is easily modified to differing physical abilities (“Good for,” 2008). Yoga can be everything from gentle to hard work. Iyengar Yoga emphasizes precise physical alignment, holding positions for a long time and uses props (bolsters, blocks, or blankets), to make practice accessible. The gentleness of Iyengar yoga makes it a good form of activity for those with physical limitations, including the disabled, and people who are older or do not exercise (“Good for”). Ashtanga is a more vigorous form of yoga. “Ashtanga offers greater aerobic benefits. It involves assuming a series of positions called sun salutations, one after the other, in rapid, flowing movements. *Vinyasa*, *flow*, and *power yoga* are all names for yoga based on Ashtanga” (“Good for,” p. 6). This type of yoga can help people meet physical goals, burn calories, create balance, flexibility, and strength through weight-bearing movements. “The practice is smooth and uninterrupted, so the practitioner learns to observe whatever arises without holding on to it or rejecting it. With continued practice, this skill of attentive nonattachment spills over into all aspects of life” (“Which yoga,” p. A4).

A relatively different style is called Hot Yoga, generally named and based on Bikram Yoga. It is practiced in a 95-100 degree room, which allows for a loosening of tight muscles and profuse sweating, which is thought to be cleansing. The Bikram method, a set series of 26 poses and classes is typically strenuous (“A brief,” 2008). In the sauna-like conditions, Bikram increases flexibility and improves circulation (“Yoga gets,” 2003).

A couple of highly practiced styles are Restorative Yoga and Yin Yoga.

Restorative Yoga is described as:

Devoted to deep rest, these classes typically include four to six floor poses held passively with the help of bolsters, blankets, sandbags, straps, eye pillows, and blocks. Expect a long Savasana at the end, with about 20 minutes devoted to sinking into the earth to help the body and mind experience true rest. (“Which yoga,” 2010, p. A6)

Yin Yoga is explained as:

A physically passive practice of seated, supine, or prone poses held for a few minutes each to maintain mobility in the connective tissue. Most of the poses focus on the lower back and hips, because the dense connective tissue in those joints requires extra care and attention. Yin poses are thought to mobilize the flow of *prana*, freeing energetic blockages. (“Which yoga,” p. A6)

The needs of some people change daily and no matter what age, just slowing down the practice and getting into deeper poses with restorative and yin yoga can do wonders for the body. These poses have the ability to leave people feeling nourished and well rested.

A few other often-practiced styles of yoga are Svaroopa, Intregal, and Kripalu.

Svaroopa is generally viewed as:

Classic Hatha positions are modified to focus on spinal muscles. The theory is that tension begins at the tailbone and moves up the spine. The positions are put together in a certain sequence that is supposed to release tight muscles and relieve tension...A class ends and begins in the same position as a basis for comparison. (“Yoga gets,” 2003, p. 5)

While Svaroopaa is focused on the spine and relieving muscle tightness, Intregal and Kripalu are more focused on the breath. With Intregal Yoga, breathing exercises are emphasized. The theory is that relaxation is linked to breathing. Standard yoga positions are used as well as meditation (“Yoga gets”). To explain deeper, Intregal yoga is:

A gentle practice based on chanting, postures, deep relaxation, breathing practices, and meditation. The focus is on returning the mind, body, and soul to its "natural condition," which includes health and strength, a clear and calm mind, a heart full of love, a strong yet pliable will, and a life filled with supreme joy.

(“Which yoga,” 2010, p. A5)

Intregal and Kripalu have similarities, however Kripalu yoga can speed up and be physically demanding. Kripalu is a more meditative form of yoga. It focuses on breathing and then moves into stretches and positions, which can be in a rapid sequence enabling a good aerobic exercise (“Yoga gets”). To further explain Kripalu:

Through asana, pranayama, meditation, and relaxation techniques, you'll learn to observe the sensations in the body and mind, and thereby discover how well a pose, or a life decision, is serving you...The primary objective is to awaken the flow of *prana* – the natural life force that will enable you to thrive in all aspects of life. (“Which yoga,” p. A6)

By some counts, there are hundreds of styles of yoga (“Which yoga,” p. A4). There are thought to be as many as 2,000 yoga postures, yet tremendous benefit can be obtained from practicing as few as 20. While practicing postures, one pays attention to lengthening the spine, linking movement with breath, and placing awareness on what is experienced in the body in each moment (Herrick & Ainsworth, 2000).

It is noted that these small goals help improve one's practice and increase the physiological health benefits yoga has for the mind and body. Each individual has personal needs for mind, body, and spirit. Each individual's practice is unique and personalized.

Benefits of yoga. The benefits of a practice in yoga range from a small degree to a life changing level. Yoga practitioners often describe having more energy, vitality, and balanced emotions (Herrick & Ainsworth, 2000). Eggleston (2008) provides detailed information on yoga's benefits for disorders, ADD, ADHD, eating habits, obesity, body image, addictions, depression, life satisfaction, and the quality of life. He also provides benefits specifically related to children, college students, and athletes. His research delves further into the benefits yoga brings to individuals with cancer, chronic pain, and/or injuries. This section will encompass some of the above stated benefits as well as cover many other benefits of yoga.

Typically, yoga classes incorporate some form of meditation. The focus can be on general mindfulness, to increase awareness in relation to the issue, and/or to modify the nature of the response and reactivity to the experience or issue. "In guided meditation practice, the content carries significance and is intended to engage a particular aspect of self but in a mindful, rather than analytical or judgmental way" (Lehrer, Woolfolk, & Sime, 2007, p. 410). Another way to look at this aspect in the practice: "Yoga can be considered a body-focused practice with a distinct type of guided or targeted meditation" (Lehrer et al., p. 411). Janowiak (1993) describes the outcomes of those who meditate:

A substantial body of research literature has indicated significant differences between meditators and nonmeditators in measures of ego-strength, self-esteem,

self-actualization, anxiety, and well-being. These differences involve not only the reduction of negative qualities such as neuroticism and depression, but also an increase in the more fundamental qualities of an integrated and satisfying life. (p. 15-16)

Godfrey (2006) explains yoga meditation as a common mind-body strategy. It is internal concentration with the goal of being in the moment and clearing away thoughts and worries. It is constantly taking the practitioner a step closer to being aware of the divinity residing in their inner heart and soul. No matter the direct focus, meditation in yoga brings an array of influences to its practitioners.

Along with the benefits of meditation incorporated into the yoga practice, the breathing associated in yoga has a significant effect. Regulated breathing is viewed as a bridge between the mind (unconscious) and body (conscious) because it can improve physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. In effect, the simple breathing techniques integrated in yoga can help lower blood pressure, calm a racing heart, and improve some digestive problems (Godfrey, 2006). Godfrey's work discussing mind-body medicine for women states, "Yoga reduces anxiety, promotes well-being, and improves quality of life among the women who practice it regularly. Given its excellent safety profile, it is an appropriate therapeutic regimen [for a vast amount of medical conditions or non at all]..." (p. 1113).

Breathing in yoga is not just associated with internal mental and spiritual benefits. The benefits of breathing aligned with the safety component of yoga fall over into the physical element as well. One particular study for just one medical condition highlights this point: "People with osteoarthritis may have constricted joint capsules, tight

ligaments, or shortened muscles, limited range of motion, inflammation, and higher risk of injury. An emphasis on alignment and anatomy makes styles like Iyengar and Anusara yoga ideal alleviating osteoarthritis” (“Best practice,” 2009). Breathing during stretches and through poses helps relieve tension and tightness. It brings oxygen and energy to the part in the body that the breath is directed. Along with the use of breath, the use of blocks, blankets, and straps can make poses easier and create a friendly style of yoga for a variety of needs and conditions.

Yoga can help to alleviate a wide array of illnesses, injuries, and other conditions. Yoga can also have significant benefits in improving the health-related aspects of physical fitness. This was specifically demonstrated and studied in an eight-week study of regular hatha yoga practice in young, healthy, predominantly female subjects. Although previous studies used indirect measurements and estimates, this study comprehensively and quantitatively measured muscle strength and endurance, flexibility, cardiorespiratory endurance, body composition, and pulmonary function (Tran, Holly, Lashbrook, & Amsterdam, 2001). The results indicate that hatha yoga practice can significantly increase ankle flexibility, shoulder elevation, trunk extension, and trunk flexion. The increased range of motion can most likely be attributed to the static stretching nature of the *asanas*. More specifically, yoga training was found to significantly increase muscle strength and endurance, flexibility, and cardiorespiratory endurance. (Tran, et al.)

A far too common problem in today’s society is stress. “Stress is often related to an individual’s lifestyle and occupation, with factors of high stress producing negative health outcomes for individuals” (Eggleston, 2008, p. 22). Roosevelt University’s Stress Institute is a leading national research institution. This institute has identified yoga

stretching as an effective method for increasing relaxation and improving multiple stress-related variables including energy, awareness, joy, mental quietness, and disengagement (Ghoncheh & Smith, 2004). Evidence-based research has documented how the benefits of yoga practice have gone beyond the management of stress. Yoga is now used as a treatment for individuals with mental illness, heart disease, cancer, and treating acute injuries (Eggleston).

Summary. When discussing yoga philosophies and styles, traditionally undertaken as a spiritual practice, yoga is better known in the West for its challenging physical training (Baldwin, 1999). In spite of this growing trend, for some yoga practitioners, spirituality is still a large component. The wide variety of yoga styles allows for yoga participants to choose classes and styles appropriate for each individual person and to each person's needs and wants. Although previous research has been conducted and evaluated concerning the benefits of yoga, research on the benefits that yoga practitioners perceive is minimal.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived benefits of participants enrolled in different styles of yoga at the Yoga Centre studios in San Luis Obispo and Arroyo Grande.

Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the highest rated benefits participants receive from yoga overall?

2. What are the highest rate benefits for each of the three main style groupings?
3. What are common initial fears amongst those new to yoga?
4. What are common reasons for beginning a yoga practice?

Delimitations

This study was delimited to the following parameters:

1. Information on the benefits of yoga was gathered from yoga participants at the Yoga Centre in San Luis Obispo and Arroyo Grande.
2. Perception of benefits were analyzed.
3. The data were collected during winter of 2011.
4. Information for this study was gathered using a self-administered questionnaire.

Limitations

This study was limited by the following factors:

1. The instrument used in this study was not tested for validity or reliability.
2. A convenience sample prevented generalizability to a larger population.
3. The study involved a relatively small sample size.

Assumptions

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. It was assumed that Yoga Centre participants would respond honestly and to the best of their knowledge.

2. It was assumed that members of the San Luis Obispo or Arroyo Grande Yoga Centre were the participants in this study.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as used in this study:

Asana. physical postures (NCCAM, 2009)

Ashtanga. involves assuming a series of positions called sun salutations, one after the other, in rapid, flowing movements. *Vinyasa*, *flow*, and *power yoga* are all names for yoga based on Ashtanga (“Good for,” 2008)

Dharana. concentration (NCCAM)

Guided meditation. the content carries significance and is intended to engage a particular aspect of self but in a mindful, rather than analytical or judgmental, way (Lehrer et al., 2007)

Hatha. a Sanskrit word that literally means "sun"(ha) and "moon"(tha), referring to the physical practices of yoga, including active and relaxing poses. Technically, all posture-based yoga (“Which yoga,” 2010)

Hot Yoga. practiced in a 95-100 degree room, which allows for a loosening of tight muscles and profuse sweating, which is thought to be cleansing. The Bikram method is a set series of 26 poses and classes are typically strenuous (“A brief,” 2008)

Intregal Yoga. a gentle practice based on chanting, postures, deep relaxation, breathing practices, and meditation with a focus on returning us to our "natural condition" (“Which yoga”)

Iyengar. (pronounced eye-en-gar) emphasizes precise physical alignment, holding positions for a long time and uses props (bolsters, blocks, or blankets) making practice accessible to all (“Good for”)

Kripalu. (pronounced kruh-PAH-loo) a more meditative form of yoga. It focuses on breathing and then moves into stretches and positions, which can be in a rapid sequence (“Yoga gets,” 2003)

Meditation. The focus can be just general mindfulness, to increase awareness in relation to the issue, and/or to modify the nature of the response and reactivity to the experience/issue.

NCCAM. The National Center for Complementary & Alternative Medicine

Niyama. healthy habits (NCCAM)

Pranayama. breathing habits (NCCAM)

Pratyahara. sense withdrawal (NCCAM)

Regulated breathing. a bridge between the mind (unconscious) and body (conscious) (Godfrey)

Restorative Yoga. devoted to deep rest, these classes typically include four to six floor poses held passively with the help of bolsters, blankets, sandbags, straps, eye pillows, and blocks. A long Savasana at the end is devoted to sinking into the earth to help the body and mind experience true rest. (“Which yoga”)

Samadhi. higher consciousness (NCCAM)

Sanskrit. the classical language of India (Herrick & Ainsworth, 2000)

Svaroopa. (pronounced swa-ROO-pah) hatha positions are modified to focus on spinal muscles. The theory is that tension begins at the tailbone and moves up the spine.

The positions are put together in a certain sequence that is supposed to release tight muscles and relieve tension (“Yoga gets”)

Yama. moral behavior (NCCAM)

Yin Yoga. a physically passive practice of seated, supine, or prone poses held for a few minutes each to maintain mobility in the connective tissue. Yin poses are thought to mobilize the flow of *prana*, freeing energetic blockages (“Which Yoga”)

Yoga meditation. a common mind-body strategy. It is internal concentration with the goal of being in the moment and clearing away thoughts and worries. It is constantly taking the practitioner a step closer to being aware of the divinity residing in their inner heart and soul (Godfrey, 2006)

Chapter 2

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived benefits of participants enrolled in different styles of yoga at the Yoga Centre studios in San Luis Obispo and Arroyo Grande. This chapter includes the description of subjects, description of instruments, description of procedures, and the method of data analysis.

Description of Subjects

The subjects in this study were Yoga Centre members at either the San Luis Obispo or Arroyo Grande, California locations. At the time of the study, the total population at the Yoga Centre contracted as monthly-unlimited members included 274 females and males. The average age was 32. The 2,686 subjects that could have participated included individuals who had interest in the Yoga Centre and those who have tried class once or twice to monthly-unlimited members and everything in between. The sampling procedure was convenience and purposive (non-probability) sampling. The researcher chose only Yoga Centre members because they are relevant, appropriate participants in the study. Subjects have appropriate knowledge and experience to participate in the survey.

Description of Instrument

This study was completed using a self-administered and electronic questionnaire. The instrument was developed by the researcher and designed to examine perceived benefits of yoga participants taking yoga classes at the Yoga Centre studios in San Luis

Obispo and Arroyo Grande. It contained 27 questions consisting of, general yoga related questions, specified in-depth questions, 3-point Likert-type scale questions, and demographic questions. The first three fill-in-the blank questions aimed to determine the length of time the individual had practiced yoga, where (studio or home), and how often. The next three questions were intended to find out what styles of yoga the individual practiced, their level of investment, and their preferred yoga style, by simply checking the appropriate box or boxes or circling the answer(s). The following two open-ended questions were directed at discussing why the individual started practicing yoga and initial fears.

The main section of this instrument was a 3-point Likert-type scale, 1 representing no benefit and 3 representing major benefit. This scale presented 13 different benefits including: cardiovascular health, muscle tone, flexibility, weight maintenance, strength, spirituality, mood, stress relief, friendships/relationships, social interaction, therapy, relaxation, and meditation. These benefits were compared to three groupings of various styles of yoga at the Yoga Centre studios: First style grouping, Gentle, Yin and Restorative; Second style grouping, Vinyasa Flow (all types); Third style grouping, Intro to Yoga, Yoga Basics & Hatha. The various styles were compiled into three groups based on their similarities. Each grouping as a whole was compared with each other. This scale was used to evaluate the level of benefit each participant experiences during, after, and as a result of yoga.

The next open-ended question, treated as an independent variable, was directed towards the benefits or experiences that make yoga special to an individual. The proceeding open-ended question, also treat as an independent variable, was to determine

what would inspire others to practice yoga. The following four demographic questions were meant to help separate, identify, and compare characteristics of Yoga Centre members, as well as to look at similarities and differences between them.

The researcher developed the survey instrument utilized for this study in consultation with the owners of the Yoga Centre in San Luis Obispo. Field tests were conducted with Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration students as well as pilot tests by individuals practicing yoga. Any flaws in the pilot or field tests were assessed and changed in the survey before the actual participants were surveyed.

An initial draft of the self-administered questionnaire was field tested by four Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration students. The final draft of the instrument was pilot tested by five friends of the researcher who had been practicing yoga. The pilot test determined that the instrument could collect the necessary data aimed to answer the research questions and purpose of the study. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix A.

Accompanying each questionnaire, participants were given or emailed in an attachment an Informed Consent Letter. The letter indicated who the researcher was and the purpose of the study. It emphasized the subject's rights for participating in the survey, how long it would take, that there were no risks associated with completing the questionnaire, and potential benefits for participating in the study. It included information about the responsibility of the primary researcher to keep the content of the questionnaires anonymous. The researcher's contact information was also included for participants' who inquired about the outcomes of the study and for any questions. Both the instrument and Informed Consent Letter (procedures for implementation) were

submitted and approved by Cal Poly's Human Subjects Committee prior to distributing the questionnaires. A copy of the Informed Consent Letter can be found in Appendix B.

Description of Procedures

The Yoga Centre studios in San Luis Obispo and Arroyo Grande, California were chosen as the locations to conduct the survey. Data collection was conducted in concert with The Yoga Centre. Owners Jenn and Travis Bobbitt were asked to distribute the questionnaires to their members during a one-week period in January of 2011. The owners and staff of the Yoga Centre were briefly trained as research assistants to ensure consistency with data collection. The questionnaires were placed at the front desk along with an informed consent form for each survey and a general statement posted regarding what the survey was about. Over the one-week period, the owners and instructors reminded and encouraged members to complete the questionnaire. Questionnaires were collected by the researcher at the end of the one-week period. During the same time period the owners also distributed the electronic questionnaire via email to all its members. After one week the researcher gathered the data retrieved from the electronic questionnaires.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were collected and then tabulated and analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Demographic variables were analyzed using frequency and percentage. To answer two out of the five research questions pertaining to participant perceptions of benefits from yoga, Likert-type scale data were analyzed using measures of central tendency (i.e. mean,

standard deviation). Using the 3-point Likert scale for benefits, mean scores of 2.0 or above were determined to indicate an acceptable level. Common initial fears amongst those new to yoga and common reasons for beginning a yoga practice were grouped into common themes and then analyzed using frequency and percentage.

Chapter 3

PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived benefits of participants enrolled in different styles of yoga at the Yoga Centre studios in San Luis Obispo and Arroyo Grande. The subjects completed a total of 163 questionnaires; 25 self-administered and 138 electronic questionnaires. The 2,686 people in the target population included individuals who had general interest in the Yoga Centre, participants enrolled in classes, and monthly-unlimited members. The response rate was approximately 6%. However, only 649 (28.6%) opened the email and of that number the response rate was 25%. The following sections present the findings from the survey.

Subjects Characteristics

One hundred and sixty-three subjects responded to the self-administered and electronic questionnaires. Demographic variable measurements involved gender, age, education, and marital status. Of the 163 respondents, 142 were female (88.2%) and 17 were male (10.6%). The subjects' ages were spread out over four age range brackets. The most frequently checked age groups were 41-60 (n = 51, 31.7%), 20-40 (n = 44, 27.3%), and 18-25 (n = 44, 27.3%). For a complete presentation of these findings, see Table 1. There were varying levels of education completed by the subjects. About half (49.1%) of the subjects have completed a bachelor degree and the other half was distributed between the completion of high school (21.7%) and a graduate degree (28.6%) (see Table 2). Of

the 161 responses, 88 were single (54.7%), 70 were married (43.5%), and 3 did not respond (1.9%).

Table 1
Age of Subjects According to Frequency and Percentage

Age	<i>f</i>	%
18-25	44	27.3
26-40	44	27.3
41-60	51	31.7
60 and over	20	12.4
No Response	2	1.2
Total	161	100.0

Table 2
Level of Education Completed by Subjects According to Frequency and Percentage

Education Level	<i>f</i>	%
Prior High School	0	0.0
High School	35	21.7
Bachelors	79	49.1
Graduate Degree	46	28.6
No Response	1	0.6
Total	161	100.0

Yoga Background

Participants answered questions regarding the amount of time they have practiced yoga in their life, the amount of time they have been practicing yoga at the Yoga Centre, the number of classes they take per week at a studio, the types of yoga they have practiced in the past year, the level of investment yoga is in their life, and the type of

activity yoga is for them. Of the 161 subjects who answered the amount of time they have practiced yoga, 67 (41.6%) of the subjects have practiced yoga for 1-4 years and 41 (25.5%) continued practicing yoga for 5-10 years. Twenty-eight (17.4%) of the subjects have practiced 11-29 years (8.7%) and 30+ years (8.7%). For a complete presentation of the findings, see Table 3.

Participants (161) who answered how long they have been practicing at the Yoga Centre, the time frame of 1 to 5 months had the highest percentage of subjects practicing (29.8%). For a further presentation of the findings, look to Table 4. Seventy (43.48%) subjects take 2-3 yoga classes per week at a studio. Nine (5.59%) subjects take 6-7 yoga classes per week at a studio. For a comprehensive representation of these results, see Table 5.

Most of the subjects (n = 115, 71.4%) practiced Vinyasa Flow at least once in the past year. Subjects also practiced, at least once, Hatha (n = 103, 64%) and Restorative (n = 101, 62.7%) in the past year. For a complete presentation of these findings, see Table 6.

The subjects' level of investment in their yoga practice varied from minimal to having it has a major part of their life (see Table 7). The highest occurring answer at 31.7% was an average level of investment, closely followed by participants seeing yoga as a major part of their life at 27.3%.

Yoga is a different type of activity for each individual. Subjects chose all types that applied to or for them. For most of the subjects (n = 152, 94.4%), yoga is a physical activity. Yoga is less of a social activity (n = 66, 41%) than the other activities. For a complete presentation of these findings, see Table 8.

Table 3
Amount of Time Subjects have Practiced Yoga According to Frequency and Percentage

Years	<i>f</i>	%
< 1	25	15.53
1 - 4	67	41.61
5 - 10	41	25.47
11 - 29	14	8.70
30 +	14	8.70
Total	161	100.00

Table 4
Amount of Time Subjects have Practiced at the Yoga Centre According to Frequency and Percentage

Time	<i>f</i>	%
Less than a month	41	25.47
1 to 5 months	48	29.81
6 to 12 months	35	21.74
More than a year	37	22.98
Total	161	100.00

Table 5
Classes per Week Subjects Attend Yoga Classes at a Studio According to Frequency and Percentage

Classes/Week	<i>f</i>	%
0 - 1	49	30.43
2 - 3	70	43.48
4 - 5	33	20.50
6 - 7	9	5.59
Total	161	100.00

Table 6
Style(s) of Yoga Subjects have Practiced in the Last Year According to Frequency and Percentage

Styles of Yoga	<i>f</i>	%
Ashtanga	25	15.5
Vinyasa Flow	115	71.4
Hatha	103	64.0
Yin	75	46.6
Gentle	64	39.8
Yoga Basics	77	47.8
Restorative	101	62.7
Iyengar	26	16.1
Heated	26	16.1
Other	23	14.3
Total	161	100

Table 7
Subjects Level of Investment in the Yoga Practice According to Frequency and Percentage

Investment Level	<i>f</i>	%
Minimal	29	18.0
Average	51	31.7
Above Average	35	21.7
Is a major part of my life	44	27.3
Total	161	100

Table 8
The Type of Activity Yoga is for the Subject According to Frequency and Percentage

Activity Type	<i>f</i>	%
Physical	152	94.4
Psychological	137	85.1
Emotional	113	70.2
Social	66	41.0
Spiritual	97	60.2

Yoga Benefits

Participant perceived benefits from and with different styles of yoga were analyzed using a 3-point Likert scale. With Gentle, Yin and Restorative styles of yoga, Stress Relief had the highest mean score at 2.92 and the lowest standard deviation at 0.08. Meditation and Relaxation (2.87 mean, 0.13 SD), Mood (2.87 mean, 0.12 SD), Therapeutic (2.87 mean, 0.13 SD), and Flexibility (2.84 mean, 0.15 SD) were also rated highly as benefits. Mean scores of 2.0 or above were determined to indicate an acceptable level. No mean scores were calculated below 2.0. For more information on the benefits related to this style type of yoga, reference Table 9.

Vinyasa Flow was another style of yoga rated by participants. With Vinyasa Flow styles of yoga, Flexibility (2.89), Muscle Tone, Strength (2.88), and Stress Relief (2.88) had the highest mean scores. Friendships, Relationships, and Social Interaction had the lowest mean at 2.36 and Spirituality had the highest variance of .40 SD from its 2.46 mean. All mean scores were above an acceptable level of 2.0. For a complete presentation of the findings, see Table 10.

Also rated by participants were Intro to Yoga, Yoga, Basics, and Hatha styles of yoga. Flexibility (2.78) and Stress relief (2.78) rated the highest for mean and lowest for standard deviation by the participants. Weight Maintenance (2.28) was rated the lowest in terms of mean and standard deviation. All mean scores were above an acceptable level of 2.0. For a complete presentation of the findings, see Table 11.

After tabulating the mean score for the three groupings of different yoga styles, the combined mean score for all the benefits of the three style groups were tabulated. The highest rated benefit of yoga overall, this is including all the above styles, was Stress Relief at a 2.86 mean score. The second highest rated benefit overall was Flexibility (2.84). The least important benefit was Friendships, Relationships, and Social Interaction (2.34) (see Table 12).

Table 9
Gentle, Yin and Restorative Benefits According to Mean Score and Standard Deviation

Yoga Benefits	Mean	SD
Cardiovascular Health	2.07	0.40
Flexibility	2.84	0.15
Friendships, Relationships, Social Interaction	2.27	0.36
Meditation, Relaxation	2.87	0.13
Mood	2.87	0.12
Muscle Tone, Strength	2.24	0.41
Spirituality	2.47	0.44
Stress Relief	2.92	0.08
Therapeutic	2.87	0.13
Weight Maintenance	1.91	0.41

Table 10
Vinyasa Flow (all types) Benefits According to Mean and Standard Deviation

Yoga Benefits	Mean	SD
Cardiovascular Health	2.75	0.22
Flexibility	2.89	0.09
Friendships, Relationships, Social Interaction	2.36	0.35
Meditation, Relaxation	2.52	0.31
Mood	2.85	0.14
Muscle Tone, Strength	2.88	0.12
Spirituality	2.46	0.40
Stress Relief	2.88	0.11
Therapeutic	2.68	0.27
Weight Maintenance	2.55	0.38

Table 11
Intro to Yoga, Yoga Basics, Hatha Benefits According to Mean and Standard Deviation

Yoga Benefits	Mean	SD
Cardiovascular Health	2.37	0.36
Flexibility	2.78	0.17
Friendships, Relationships, Social Interaction	2.39	0.34
Meditation, Relaxation	2.62	0.31
Mood	2.75	0.20
Muscle Tone, Strength	2.65	0.23
Spirituality	2.40	0.41
Stress Relief	2.78	0.17
Therapeutic	2.69	0.23
Weight Maintenance	2.28	0.48

Table 12
Subjects Overall Average of Benefits for the Three Groups of Styles

Benefit	Combined Mean Score
Cardiovascular Health	2.39
Flexibility	2.84
Friendships, Relationships, Social Interaction	2.34
Meditation, Relaxation	2.67
Mood	2.83
Muscle Tone, Strength	2.59
Spirituality	2.44
Stress Relief	2.86
Therapeutic	2.75
Weight Maintenance	2.25

Common Themes: Initial Fears and Reasons to Begin the Yoga Practice

One hundred fifty-five of the subjects answered an open-ended question regarding why they started practicing yoga. The responses were grouped into four concentrated areas: Friends/Family, Health/Fitness, Stress Relief, and Other. Health and Fitness (n = 92, 59.35%) was the most frequent response. For a complete presentation of the findings, see Table 13.

One hundred forty-six subjects answered an open-ended question regarding their initial fears when starting yoga. Their answers were concentrated into six fear categories: None, Lack of Flexibility or Strength, Do it Wrong/Not Good Enough, Injury and/or Pain, Conflicts with Beliefs, and Other. Fifty-two (36%) said they had no fears going into it. Forty-nine (34%) of the subjects reporting that they were fearful that they would do it

wrong or that they were not good enough. For a complete presentation of these findings, see Table 14.

Table 13
Reasons Participants Started Yoga According to Frequency and Percentage

Reasons	<i>f</i>	%
Friends and Family	31	20.00
Health/Fitness	92	59.35
Stress Relief	18	11.61
Other	14	9.03
Total	155	100

Table 14
Subjects Initial Fears When Starting Yoga According to Frequency and Percentage

Fears	<i>f</i>	%
None	52	36
Lack of Flexibility or Strength	15	10
Do it Wrong/Not Good Enough	49	34
Injury and/or Pain	8	5
Conflicts with Beliefs	6	4
Other	16	11
Total	146	100

The results presented in this chapter indicate that the majority of the participants practice yoga for overall health and fitness reasons. The participants highest perceived benefit from yoga overall was stress relief. Many conclusions can be drawn from these findings, which can be used to potentially create a better environment and teacher instruction conducive to individuals' fears, stress relief, and overall health and fitness. A detailed summary of the findings will follow in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived benefits of participants enrolled in different styles of yoga at the Yoga Centre studios in San Luis Obispo and Arroyo Grande. This study helped determine common fears when beginning yoga and common trends of why individuals start and continue practicing yoga. This concluding chapter will include the following: summary of the study, a discussion of the findings including limitations, conclusions based on research questions, recommendations for the organization (Yoga Centre), and future research.

Summary

Yoga is a practice connecting together with mind, body, and spirit. Origins date back to ancient India philosophy and provide many physical, psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual benefits. The various styles of yoga that people use for health purposes typically combine physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation or relaxation.

Yoga encompasses a variety of practices, which may include postures, breathing exercises meditation, mantras, lifestyle changes (e.g., diet, sleep, hygiene), spiritual beliefs, and rituals. Different yoga styles utilize and emphasize different practices reflecting the varied practice of yoga in India and the United States. Yoga was traditionally undertaken as a spiritual practice, however it is better known in the West for its challenging physical training. There is a wide variety of yoga styles, which allows

participants to choose classes and styles appropriate to individual needs and wants. The benefits range from small to a life changing magnitude.

During winter of 2011, data were collected, using self-administered and electronic questionnaires, from 163 friends and members of the Yoga Centre studios. Demographic variables and open-ended questions were analyzed using frequency and percentage. Questions pertaining to participant perceptions of benefits from yoga used Likert-type scale data and were analyzed using measures of central tendency.

Significant results include the majority of the participants get started with yoga and continue practicing for overall health and fitness reasons. For most of the subjects (94.4%), yoga is a physical activity. Participants highest perceived benefit from yoga overall was stress relief.

Discussion

Many conclusions can be drawn from this study. The findings reveal that the majority of participants are female with varying ages and education levels, and most subjects are single. A little over two thirds of the subjects began yoga in recent years, as yoga is still a newer trend in the United States, although growing rapidly. The highest percentage of subjects have been practicing yoga at the Yoga Centre for 1–5 months, although individual's time frames highly vary. The Yoga Centre recently changed ownership and has attracted many new members, which could be why the lesser months are a higher percentage. Most participants practice yoga at a studio 0-5 times a week with the majority taking class 2–3 times per week. A high number of the subjects have practiced Vinyasa, Hatha, and Resorative yoga in the past year. The subjects' level of

investment in their yoga practice varies across the board from minimal to having it as a major part of their life. The subjects mostly think of yoga as a physical practice and least as a social engagement. In Gentle, Yin, and Restorative styles of yoga participants' highest rated perceived benefits include stress relief, meditation, relaxation, mood, and flexibility. In Vinyasa Flow styles of yoga participants' highest rated perceived benefits include flexibility, muscle tone, strength, and stress relief. In Intro to Yoga, Yoga Basics and Hatha styles of yoga participants highest rated perceived benefits are stress relief and flexibility. Yoga overall, including all these styles, participants perceive stress relief as the highest benefit. Most of the subjects start practicing yoga for health and fitness reasons. Many of the subjects said that they have no fears when starting yoga and many of the subjects said their initial fear is that they would do it wrong or thought that they are not good enough.

When relating these findings to previous research, many if not all aspects are consistent with previous literature, studies, and findings. In the findings subjects state that a fear when starting yoga is that it goes against their beliefs (religions, etc.) and this has been mentioned in previous research of why individuals are skeptical to participate in a yoga practice or lifestyle. It is also consistent with people in the United States starting yoga for the pure fitness and health factor. The other benefits and reasons for participation come after that initial reason. Benefits including cardiovascular health, flexibility, social, meditation, relaxation, mood, muscle tone, strength, spirituality, stress relief, therapeutic (helping mentally or with physical pain), and emotional have been considered and proven to come from yoga in previous research. Previous research,

reassures that yoga can provide the individual with overall better mind, body, and spiritual health, balance, and well-being.

Limitations of this study include a relatively small sample size and generalizability to a larger population. Additional subjects and broad ability sampling would provide a more concrete foundation for the research design and findings.

This study provides additional information that may help yoga studio owners' attract customers and retain yoga participants in the system long-term. The Yoga Centre's marketing and sales area, and instruction could benefit from being knowledgeable about these findings. This study can be useful to those interested in starting yoga and those interested in the gains that will come from yoga if they choose to partake in its practice. By sharing participant's stories and information, and awareness of common fears could help others who want to get involved but have skepticism or are afraid. This study provides a better understanding of why individuals choose to participate in yoga.

A major facet of the recreation, parks, and tourism field pertains to recreation, sports, leisure, free time, and balanced living. Yoga is one form of free time, leisure, and/or recreation depending how the individual chooses to view it. These findings contribute to the knowledge of healthy living. It is an outlet to relieve stress and tension, and to take a break from the "real world." Yoga heals and nourishes the mind, body, and spirit, and it encourages overall healthy habits.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The highest rated benefits participants receive from yoga overall were stress relief and improved flexibility.
2. The highest rated benefit for Gentle, Yin and Restorative styles of yoga were stress relief, Vinyasa Flow had Flexibility as the highest rated benefit, and participants rated stress relief and flexibility as the highest benefit for Intro to Yoga, Yoga Basics, and Hatha styles of yoga.
3. Common initial fears amongst those new to yoga include lack of flexibility or strength, doing it wrong or not doing it good enough, injury and pain, and conflicts with beliefs.
4. Common reasons for starting yoga include friends and family, health and fitness, and stress relief.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Continue offering beginner level yoga classes but promote in new ways that is comforting and affirming to the fears of those just starting out.
2. Future research should examine differences between age groups and perceived benefits as well as gender and perceived benefits.
3. Continue in the growth of the Yoga Centre but do not lose that small, comforting, hands-on, friendly, warm feeling that is conducive to a social environment and a private, special practice depending on the needs and wants of the individual's preference.
4. Inform the staff and teachers of these current results to keep everyone aware of the thoughts and opinions of the members, friends, and clients.

5. Provide an easy way to get this information out to those interested in starting yoga or wanting to learn more about it. People are comforted and assured when others feel the same way they do.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Self-Administered Questionnaire



Examining the Benefits of Yoga

Please complete the following items to the best of your ability. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather data to evaluate the perceived benefits of yoga participation. Our goal is to find out how important the following attributes are in correlation to yoga. Thank you for participating in this survey, it is completely voluntary and anonymous.

How many years have you practiced yoga? Total: _____ At Yoga Centre: _____

How many classes per week do you attend yoga classes at a studio? _____

How many days per week do you practice yoga at home? _____

What style(s) of yoga have you practiced in the last year? (all that apply)

- Ashtanga Vinyasa Flow Hatha Yin Gentle Yoga Basics
- Restorative Iyengar Heated Other _____

What is the level of your investment in yoga practice? (only one)

- Minimal Average Above Average Is a major part of my life

For you, yoga is what type of activity? (all that apply)

- Physical Psychological Emotional Social Spiritual

What led you to start practicing yoga? _____

What were your initial fears (if any) when starting yoga? _____

Please evaluate the level of benefit you experience for each of the following benefits and types of yoga (include only the types of yoga that you have practiced).
 Circle **1** if **no** benefit, **2** if **some** benefit, **3** if **major** benefit, and **N/A** if you do not know.

	Gentle, Yin & Restorative	Vinyasa Flow (all types)	Intro to Yoga, Yoga Basics & Hatha
Cardiovascular Health	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A
Flexibility	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A
Friendships/Relationships	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A
Meditation	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A
Mood	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A
Muscle Tone	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A
Relaxation	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A
Social Interaction	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A
Spirituality	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A
Strength	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A
Stress Relief	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A
Therapy	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A
Weight Maintenance	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A	1 2 3 N/A

Are there any other benefits or experiences that make yoga special for you? _____

What do you think would inspire your friends/family to practice yoga? _____

Level of education completed: one Prior High School High School
Bachelors Graduate Degree

Marital Status: Single Married

Age: 18-25 26-40 41-60 61 and over

Gender: Male Female

◆ Thank you for participating! Namaste. ◆

Appendix B
Electronic Questionnaire

Cal Poly and Yoga Centre are teaming up to examine the benefits of yoga.

Please take a moment to fill out this survey and help one of our amazing Cal

Poly students complete her final project :) We thank you all for your

feedback! [Continue >](#)

[Online Surveys](#) by



Yoga Centre, Central Coast Yoga Survey

1. How many years have you practiced yoga?

50 characters left.

2 How long have you practiced at the Yoga Centre?

.

50 characters left.

3. How many classes per week do you attend yoga classes at a studio?

50 characters left.

4. How many days per week do you practice yoga at home?

50 characters left.

5. What style(s) of yoga have you practiced in the last year?

(Check all that apply)

Ashtanga

Vinyasa Flow

Hatha

Yin

Gentle

Yoga Basics

Restorative

Iyengar

Heated

Other

6. What is the level of your investment in yoga practice?

(Check only one)

Minimal

Average

Above Average

Is a major part of my life

7. For you, yoga is what type of activity?

(check all that apply)

Physical

Psychological

Emotional

Social

Spiritual

8 What led you to start practicing yoga?

.

350 characters left.

9 What were your initial fears (if any) when starting yoga?

.

350 characters left.

Please rate the benefits of the following styles of yoga.

10. Gentle, Yin, and Restorative

	No Benefit	Some Benefit	Major Benefit	N/A
Cardiovascular Health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Flexibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendships, Relationships, Social Interaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meditation, Relaxation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mood	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Muscle Tone, Strength	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spirituality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stress Relief	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Therapeutic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weight Maintenance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Vinyasa Flow (all types)

	No Benefit	Some Benefit	Major Benefit	N/A
Cardiovascular Health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Flexibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendships, Relationships, Social Interaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meditation, Relaxation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mood	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Muscle Tone, Strength	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spirituality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stress Relief	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Therapeutic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weight Maintenance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Intro to Yoga, Yoga Basics, and Hatha

	No Major	Some Benefit	Major Benefit	N/A
Cardiovascular Health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Flexibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendships, Relationships, Social Interaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meditation, Relaxation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mood	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Muscle Tone, Strength	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spirituality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stress Relief	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Therapeutic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weight Maintenance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Are there any other benefits or experiences that make yoga special for you?

350 characters left.

14. What do you think would inspire your friends/family to practice yoga?

350 characters left.

15. Level of education completed:
(check only one)

- Prior High School
- High School
- Bachelors
- Graduate Degree

16. Marital Status:

- Single
- Married

17. Age:

- 18-25
- 26-40
- 41-60
- 60 and over

18. Gender:

- Male
- Female

Thank you for participating! Namaste.

Thank you again for your participation in our survey. We value and

appreciate your input.

Online Surveys by



Finish

Appendix C
Informed Consent Letter

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A YOGA BENEFITS STUDY

A research project on perceived yoga benefits is being conducted by Jennifer Lovas as a senior project in Recreation, Parks and Tourism Administration under the direct supervision of Dr. Bill Hendricks. The purpose of this research is to examine the benefits of yoga participation in San Luis Obispo.

You are being asked to take part in this study by completing a self-administered questionnaire. Your participation will take approximately 3-5 minutes. Please be aware that you are not required to participate in this research, and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. You may omit any items you prefer not to answer.

There are no risks anticipated with participation in this study.

Your anonymity will be protected through an anonymous questionnaire. Please ensure anonymity by not writing your name on the questionnaire. Potential benefits associated with the study include additional information/knowledge that may help yoga studio owners' bring in new people and retain yoga participants in the system long term. This study will also potentially be useful to those interested in getting into yoga and those interested in the gains that will come from yoga if they choose to partake in its practice. It will help to find common fears of beginners and why they chose to start taking yoga. It is meant to help provide a better understanding of why individuals choose to do yoga.

If you have questions regarding this study or would like to be informed of the results when the study is completed, please feel free to contact Jennifer Lovas at (858) 357-3277 and/or jlovas4@yhao.com. If you have questions or concerns regarding the manner in which the study is conducted, you may contact Dr. Steve Davis, Chair of the Cal Poly Human Subjects Committee, at 756-2754, sdavis@calpoly.edu, or Dr. Susan Opava, Dean of Research and Graduate Programs, at 756-1508, sopava@calpoly.edu.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research project as described, please indicate your agreement by completing the attached questionnaire. Please keep this form for your reference, and thank you for your participation in this research.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research project as described, please indicate your agreement by proceeding to the next page by completing the online questionnaire. Please note that a pdf copy of this form was attached to the email you received, and thank you for your participation in this research.