INTEGRATING YOGA INTO COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY:
THE PATH AND PRACTICE

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Abstract

The present study investigates the processes of integrating yoga into Western counselling and psychotherapy practices within Canadian contexts. This was accomplished by interviewing 10 mental health professionals who integrate yoga into their counselling and psychotherapy practices. Data was analyzed using the grounded theory methods and three core themes were identified in the processes of integration. The first core theme, *therapist’s preparation for integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy*, describes the ways in which therapists prepare themselves for integrating yoga into their therapy practices. The second core theme, *the therapist preparing clients to practice yoga in session*, explains the ways in which therapists prepare their clients to practice yoga in counselling and psychotherapy sessions. The third core theme, *the practice of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy*, describes the specific yoga practices and approaches that are brought into therapy practice. A mid-level theory on the process of integration is presented as the *Tri-Process Model of Integrating Yoga into Counselling and Psychotherapy*. This study has important implications for addressing the limitations of Western counselling and psychotherapy and provides therapists with an understanding of how to incorporate more holistic and body-oriented approaches in counselling and psychotherapy practice.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) approaches to treat physical and mental health have been on the rise in Canada. According to The National Centre for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), CAM is defined as “a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not presently considered to be part of conventional medicine” (Barnes, Powell-Griner, McFann, & Nahin, 2004, p. 1). These complementary and alternative practices can include traditional medicines (e.g., Ayurveda), mind-body modalities (e.g., meditation and yoga), energy therapies (e.g., Reiki), natural products (e.g., dietary supplements) and body-based methods (e.g., reflexology) (Kramlich, 2014). In the largest survey done in Canada, by the Fraser Institute in 2016, on the use of CAM approaches by Canadians, results revealed that the use of CAM approaches in Canada has been increasing over the last two decades (Esmail, 2017). According to this study, more than 79% of Canadians used at least one CAM approach in their lives in 2016, compared to 73% in 1997 and 74% in 2006 (Esmail, 2017). This survey revealed that a majority of Canadians, 79%, felt that conventional medicine did not have all the answers to their health problems (Esmail, 2017). The Fraser Institute commented in their research that “almost half of the Canadians in 2016 who used complementary and alternative medicines and therapies did so because they experienced real and prompt physical relief from them in contrast to what they experienced from conventional care” (Esmail, 2017, p. 50). This dissatisfaction with conventional medical and mental health care by Canadians speaks to the need of the mental health field to widen its scope of practice by including more practices that fall within CAM approaches, and thereby cater to clients seeking holistic treatments for their mental health care.
The field of counselling and psychotherapy has been criticized for falling short of meeting the needs of clientele who are searching for more holistic mental health approaches that align with their beliefs of healing and well-being (Harris, Randolph, & Gordon, 2016; Moodley & Oulanova, 2011; Wynn, 2015). Pittu Laungani (2002), a renowned scholar in cross-cultural counselling, asserts that the mental health model of the West tends to focus upon the “outer selves” of a person: “The overt, observable, measurable, manipulatable, responsive behaviour” (p. 390). This focus on the overt self abandons the dimensions of the “inner self,” “the metaphysical and spiritual, the private and non-observable” (p. 390). He writes that “to separate one’s inner world from one’s outer world is like trying to disentangle shadow from substance” (p. 390). Today’s Western approaches to mental health care create a separation between the mind, body and spirit and tends to heavily focus on the mental spheres. Moodley and Oulanova (2011) comment on how many of the conventional Western health care approaches focus too narrowly upon the superficial layer of illness and ignore the whole person. As a result, this creates a chasm between the beliefs and values of mental health care providers and ethnic minority populations (Laungani, 2002; Moodley & Oulanova, 2011). Immigration is increasing in Canada, and more people are coming from cultural backgrounds that subscribe to holistic healing beliefs and approaches (Guo, 2006; Surood & Lai, 2010). Incompatible health views are leading to “underutilization of mental health care services by many groups, premature termination, or poor outcomes for those who use these services” (Moodley & Oulanova, 2011, p. 90). If the field of counselling and psychotherapy is to gain credibility within a multicultural society and continue as a profession in the future, its practices must adapt to and take into consideration the predominant values and beliefs of that society (Dalal, 2011). Thus, the present challenge for counsellors, psychotherapists and mental health professionals is the movement toward discovering new and
innovative ways to meaningfully integrate traditional healing approaches that foster holistic health care in counselling and psychotherapy practice.

The need for more mind-body oriented approaches for mental health care has called for a new paradigm of counselling and psychotherapy that integrates spiritual and holistic-based interventions. A new wave of body-mind-oriented psychotherapies has emerged over the last decade that addresses the limitations of the traditional Western counselling and psychotherapy (Duros & Crowley, 2014; Klatte, Pabst, Beelman, & Rosendhal, 2016). In this new wave of mind-body-oriented approaches, the ancient practice of yoga has gained popularity and sparked the interests of many counsellors, psychotherapist and mental health professionals (Duros & Crowley, 2014; Kamradt, 2017). Counsellors and psychotherapists that want to expand their therapy services and cater to the needs of their clients looking for holistic and mind-body care approaches may do so by integrating yoga into their practices (Duros & Crowley, 2014; Forbes, Akhtar, & Douglass, 2011; Kamradt, 2017).

Yoga is an ancient tradition and holistic practice from India that includes the mind, body and spirit in healing and inner transformation (Frawley, 1999; Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008). The multiple benefits reported by yoga practitioners include reductions in stress, anxiety and depression, and improvements in physical health, mental and emotional functioning, enhanced sense of spirituality and overall well-being (Crowe, Van Puymbroeck, & Schmid, 2016; Popovic & Nikic, 2016; Rioux, 2015). The many therapeutic benefits that yoga lends to its practitioners are one of the major reasons why many counsellors and psychotherapist are interested in this ancient practice and its implications for counselling and psychotherapy.
1.1 Statement of the Problem

For therapists who are seeking to integrate yoga into their counselling and psychotherapy practice, there is little research offering direction and guidance on the integration processes (Forbes, Akhtar, & Douglass, 2011; Wynn, 2015). To date, much of the focus of yoga research has looked at short-term yoga intervention programs lasting for a few weeks or months and in-group settings for clinical populations experiencing mental health issues (Wynn, 2015). These studies focus on group yoga practices and do not address how yoga can be integrated into an individualized, one-on-one counselling and psychotherapy practice, or the processes that are involved for therapists to bring yoga safely and successfully into their clinical practices.

Without prior information regarding the “how” of integration, such as the processes and requirements involved to bring yoga into counselling and psychotherapy, some practitioners may go through trial and error in their integration process, not utilizing yogic interventions to their maximum benefits for clients, or even integrating yoga practices in a way that may put their clients at risk. Therefore, as yoga begins to emerge and establish itself as a viable therapeutic intervention, more research is required to examine how yoga can be integrated into counselling and psychotherapy practice (Forbes, Akhtar, & Douglass, 2011; Kamradt, 2017; Wynn, 2015). It is imperative for those therapists who are interested in bringing yoga into their clinical practice to be informed about the processes required for best practices of integrating yoga into their counselling and psychotherapy practice.

1.2 Major Research Question

The integration of yoga into counselling and psychotherapy is a new and emerging area of practice, and understanding the processes involved in integration still remains to be explored. The main research focus of the current investigation hopes to address these research gaps by
investigating the processes that therapists undertake in order to successfully integrate yoga into counselling and psychotherapy practice. The major research question guiding this study is: What are the processes of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy practice? This question will be answered by interviewing 10 participants who integrate yoga into their counselling and psychotherapy practice. The in-depth interviews with participants will attempt to capture the full processes of integration, including the important elements, steps, and aspects of an integrative practice.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

By capturing the experiences of participants’ integration efforts, this will fill the current research gaps and provide counsellors and psychotherapists with greater direction and understanding of the many aspects involved in integrating yoga into therapy practice. This research has important implications for therapists who are interested in bringing yoga practices to their clients. A framework with guidelines will ensure that yoga is being integrated in a safe and effective manner. The research generated will also be helpful in guiding mental health practitioners, and professionals in the mental health field, directions for developing future training programs on integrating yoga into counselling, psychotherapy and the general mental health field. Lastly, this research will enhance the field of counselling and psychotherapy by broadening the scope of practice to incorporate a person’s physical and spiritual dimensions in mental health care. This will cater to the larger client populations who are seeking to treat their mental health more holistically.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The following literature review will provide the context for the current research investigation. The literature review begins with an overview of the history of yoga and its major traditions and practices. This overview of yoga will provide the readers with an understanding of the many paths of yoga and thereby capture the true essence and multifaceted nature of yoga. A discussion on the journey of yoga to the Western world and current research studies on the effects of yoga for mental health will also be reviewed. An overview will be provided on the rise of counsellors and psychotherapists turning to yoga as a therapeutic intervention to integrate into their therapy practices. Finally, a look at current limitations in the field of counselling and psychotherapy and a statement of the problem that addresses this research will be mentioned. This section will lead to an overview of the final research objectives of the current research study, which are to examine the processes of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy practice. This main research question attempts to address the limitations of Western counselling and psychotherapy practices and encourages more holistic-based approaches in mental health care.

2.1 The History of Yoga and its Practices

Yoga comes from the root word “yuj” which means “to yoke,” Yoga is defined as to “yoke” or bring into union the individual self (the ego, sense of separate I) with the higher self (universal oneness, consciousness) (Brar, 1970). Another way to understand yoga is “Yoga chitta vritti nirodha,” which translates into “[yoga is] the cessation of the misidentification with the modifications of the mind” (Whicher, 1998, p. 272). Yoga is a holistic approach that addresses the multidimensional aspects of a person—the body, mind, energetic, and spiritual spheres—to
bring about integration, healing, and spiritual transformation (Frawley, 1999). This ancient healing system encompasses a wide variety of teachings and practices to systematically help a person achieve their true potential in the realms of physical health, mental health, and spirituality (Frawley, 1999). In yogic teachings, the aims or achievement of yoga is the experience of union with our human self and greater Self, which leads the practitioner to a sense of wholeness, integration, and inner peace (Frawley, 1999; Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008).

Great yogis and saints from India have provided many paths and approaches to yoga, which stretch over several thousands of years within Indian history (Brar, 1970; Dalal & Misra, 2010). Contrary to the practice of yoga in the West, which mainly focuses on physical postures and isolates yoga “to the mat,” the traditional practice of yoga, as taught by the sages of India, involves yoga as a lifestyle that is integrated into every aspect of one’s life (Bellhouse, 2010; Sabhlok, 2001).

The following sections provide an overview of each major yogic time period and its respective approaches and practices of yoga. The yogic time periods reviewed include:

- The Vedic Period (2500 BCE-600 BCE)
- The Upanishadic Period (800 BCE-500 BCE)
- The Epic Period (600 BCE-200 CE)
- The Sutra Period (200 BCE-600 CE)
- Classical Yoga Period (200 BCE-200 CE)
- Post-Classical Yoga Period (600 CE-1700 CE)

Each yogic time period will be reviewed along with its major yoga practices, philosophies, and approaches.
2.1.1 The Vedic Period (2500 BCE-600 BCE)

The earliest recorded history of yoga dates back to approximately 2500 BCE-600 BCE, during the Vedic period (Feuerstein, 2008). The earliest practices of yoga were recorded in ancient scriptures called the Vedas, a compilation of sacred hymns and prayers to evoke a person’s connection with the spiritual world (Feuerstein, 2008). The four major Vedic texts of that time include: Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Artha Veda. Rig Veda provided the knowledge for recitation of hymns and praises. Sama Veda was concerned with knowledge of melodies for chanting. Yajur Veda provided the knowledge for sacrificial ceremonies, and Atharva Veda elaborated on the various formulas for spells, charms and incantations (Feuerstein, 2008). Seven great sages have been considered to be the authority of the Vedas and are referred to as Saptarishi in Sanskrit, which translates to the seven sages (Feuerstein, 2008). These sages did not create the Vedas, but rather the wisdom of the Vedas were said to be revealed to them from higher divine realms. The seven sages that composed the Vedas were, Kashyapa, Atri, Vashista, Vishvamitra, Gautama Maharishi, Jamadagni and Bharadwaja (Feuerstein, 2008).

Frawley (2019), a scholar of yoga explains that the Vedas are a manifestation of knowledge, and yoga is the practice of this knowledge or Vedic wisdom. The major yogic practices during this time period, as written in the Vedas, were conducting rituals such as fire offerings and ceremonies and using sacred chants and mantras. These practices were thought to bring about blessings and sacred energies from higher realms and help connect a person to the natural world and cosmic realms (Dalal & Misra, 2010; Frawley, 1999). The true practice of yoga, according to the Vedas, brings practitioners into oneness and harmony with their true nature, called Brahman in yogic literature. The teachings of the Vedas explain that Brahman is the eternal, omnipresent, omniscient presence, and realizing one’s true nature as Brahman is the aim and achievement of yoga (Feuerstein, 2008; Frawley, 1999).
The Vedas also describe the demi-gods, which are gods that represent aspects of the natural world. The Vedas are thus theistic in orientation due to their belief in a supreme being and various deities. Many major paths and teachings of yoga emerged from the Vedas (Feuerstein, 2008).

2.1.2 Upanishadic Period (800 BCE-500 BCE)

The next major period of yogic history, the Upanishad period dates back approximately to 800 BCE-500 BCE (Shri, 2017). The major scriptures of this time were the Upanishads. The Upanishads are a vast compilation of writings by a group of sages who provided commentary on the Vedas and deciphered their cryptic verses (Dalal & Misra, 2010). There are more than two hundred known Upanishads, and of the two hundred Upanishads twelve are considered as the most important for presenting the essential teachings of the Upanishads. These twelve Upanishads are: Chandogya Upanishad, Kena Upanishad, Aitareya Upanishad, Katha Upanishad, Mundaka Upanishad, Taittiriyaka Upanishad, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Svetasvatara Upanishad, Isa Upanishad, Prasna Upanishad and Mandukya Upanishad (Prabhavananda & Manchester, 2002). There were many sages who wrote the Upanishads but the most important and revered sages of the Upanishadic period were Shwetaketu, Shandilya, Pippalada, and Sanat Kumara (Shri, 2017). Since a majority of the population at that time period was not able to read or understand the Vedas, due to the complexity of the Sanskrit language, the sages recognized the need to provide explanations on the hymns of the Vedas and move the focus from objective to subjective methods of spiritual practices (Dalal & Misra, 2010). Thus, the Upanishads were written and described subjective methods of spiritual practices such as self-inquiry, contemplation on the truth of one’s own self, and meditation. The Upanishads describe the path of Jnana yoga, which is “the yoga of knowledge or insight; it is the contemplation of the very fact of our oneness” (Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008, p. 310).
Some of the common practices of Jnana yoga involve practicing spiritual discrimination, which involves recognizing what is real from what is false (Viveka), renunciation, regular reading of scriptures, self-introspection, and inquiry into the nature of a practitioner’s true Self (Paramananda, 2001; Tejomayananda, 2006). Contemplation on a practitioner’s own true nature by using aphorisms that encapsulate essential teachings is part of the Jnaya Yoga path. An example of an aphorism is, “Aham Brahm Asmi,” which means “I am Brahman, I am the Divine,” (Paramananda, 2001). According to the Jnana yoga traditions, the world of form (including our mental contents) is ever-changing and impermanent, and therefore the nature of the world is illusionary (Maya) (Paramananda, 2001; Tejomayananda, 2006). The ultimate reality is that which never changes and never dies, i.e., Brahman, the Source, and therefore the practitioner must contemplate on this very fact of what is real and unreal. In the practice of Viveka, one may repeat the statement “neti-neti,” which translates to “not this or that,” referring to separating the unreal from the real (Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008). This practice is said to help a seeker detach from the world of illusion, and thereby lead them to liberation and freedom from suffering (Moksha) (Paramananda, 2001; Tejomayananda, 2006; Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008).

2.1.3 The Epic Period (600 BCE-200 CE)

Major doctrines and texts emerged during the time period of the Epic Age (600 BCE - 200 CE). Some of the greatest epics written at this time include the Ramayana and the Mahabharata (Shri, 2017). During the Epic period the rise of three non-orthodox systems, Charvaka philosophy, Jainism and Buddhism, also arose (Bhattacharya, 2000; Sarao, 2017).

The Ramayana is said to be written by Sage Valmiki and is 2400 versus long (Shri, 2017). The Ramayana describes the story of a God (Vishnu) who incarnated into human form during a
time period when darkness started to prevail the earth, in order to establish ethical and principled teachings, such as following one’s duty (dharma), righteous action, ethics, and morality. Rama’s actions exemplified virtues such as honesty, purity and integrity and he became known as the embodiment of truth, nobility and righteous action (Shri, 2017). The Ramayana contributed to the development of ethics and morality in Indian society and in modern times Ramayana continues to be studied for its teachings (Shri, 2017).

During this epic period the great epic, the Mahabarata, and the practice of Karma and Bhakti yoga also emerge (Jayapalan, 2008; Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008). The Mahabarata was written by sage Veda Vyasa and contains one hundred thousand versus (Jayapalan, 2008; Miller, 1986). This epic tells the story of Arjuna, a prince, who has to fight a war and the divine dialog that transpires between Arjuna and his charioteer and long-time friend, Krishna (who was said to be the incarnation of the divine in human form), on the battlefield. The dialogue between Arjuna and Krishna is called the Bhagavad Gita, which means the song of the lord (Miller, 1986). In this dialogue, Krishna instructs Arjuna about how to find liberation and freedom from suffering while engaging in worldly activities and duties (Miller, 1986). Krishna emphasizes the path of Bhakti yoga (the yoga of devotion) and Karma yoga (the yoga of service) as paths to overcome worldly difficulties and reach liberation (Chinmayananda, 2005; Miller, 1986). Along with these two paths of yoga, Krishna also spoke of Jnana yoga (the yoga of wisdom) and Raja yoga (the yoga of practices and techniques).

Karma yoga refers to the yoga of action or service (Hirschl, 2010). Krishna explains that one can learn to live in the world and yet remain above the world through practicing right action and service (Chinmayananda, 2005; Miller, 1986). Krishna explains that the three primary principles of Karma yoga are 1. giving up the fruits of one’s action, 2. surrendering all work to a
The divine, and 3. cultivating the sense of non-doership (Mitchell, 2000). In the Bhagavata Gita, Krishna states that “the superior man is he whose mind can control his senses; with no attachment to results, he engages in the yoga of action” (Mitchell, 2000, verse 3.7). The Bhagavata Gita explains that action with surrender and non-attachment releases a sense of selfishness, greed, control and attachment, and allows for the ego to dissolve (Mitchell, 2000). This leads to the cessation of anxieties and restlessness of the mind, and thus the mind can rest peacefully.

Krishna in the Bhagavata Gita also spoke about Bhakti yoga, the path of love and devotion (Hirschl, 2010). Bhakti yoga is discussed at lengths in the Bhagavata Gita, however traces of Bhakti elements are found as far back as in the Vedas and Upanishads (Feuerstein, 2008; Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008). In Bhakti yoga, one learns to achieve the right relationship with the world by attaching to a higher ideal, such as a deity, realized master, or their own concept of a Supreme being (Chinmayanada, 2005). Yogis who follows the Bhakti path develop a deep, loving relationship to their divine ideal. The mind remains focused on the object of love through practices such as reciting the name of the divine ideal, prayers, singing hymns, going to place of pilgrimage, and engaging in rituals such as adorning an altar with flowers and sweet offerings (Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008).

The Ramayana and Mahabharata, along with the Gods and deities that have been described in other ancient Indian texts called the Puranas (the Puranas date approximately to 400 BCE-800 CE) have been influential in shaping religion and religious practices of India and modern day Hinduism (Shri, 2017; Wilkins, 2005). The stories of the Gods and Goddesses are still recited in today’s modern era, along with prayers to various Gods and Goddess for a persons achievement of worldly and spiritual pursuits (Shri, 2017).
Three heterodox school of Indian philosophy: During the epic age there were certain sages that rejected the idea of theism, the belief in a creator God, and the ritualistic and philosophical beliefs of the Vedas. Many great scholars at this time were not in agreement with Vedic practices and the current philosophies that overemphasized worship, rituals and the hierarchal systems of power in India, such as priests holding the authority over spiritual knowledge (Sharma, 1962). What emerged were three major philosophical traditions that were non-orthodox, were atheistic, and did not confirm with the standards and beliefs of the existing Indian philosophical traditions (Sharma, 1962). These three systems were called Nastika philosophies, which translates to those philosophies which reject the authority of the Vedas (Sharma, 1962). The three heterodox philosophical systems were: Charvaka, Jainism and Buddhism (Sharma, 1962).

The Charvaka system of thought radically rejected many of the traditional notions of its era, such as the belief in God, deities, the afterlife, and reincarnation (Bhattacharya, 2000). Charvaka philosophers were materialists and rejected the idea of religion and the religious order in India. For believers of Charvaka philosophy, the pleasures of life were to be enjoyed and what was presented to the physical senses and the body was the only possible reality, everything that was imperceivable by the senses were just fantasies, such as a belief in God, spirit, soul and the afterlife (Bhattacharya, 2000). The founder of Charvaka philosophy is said to be sage Brihaspati, although it has been speculated that the teachings had come from sage Charvaka and Brihaspati was his disciple (Sharma, 1962). This philosophy is known as the most radical and divergent school of thought from the existing Indian philosophical schools due to its complete rejection of the religion, theological and the spiritual notions of its time (Bhattacharya, 2000). According to ancient legends, the demigods had asked their teacher, Brihaspati, to provide a philosophy to the
demons that would destroy them (Sharma, 1962). It was Charvaka philosophy that was given to the demons in order to lead them towards self-destruction.

The rise of Jainism marks the next major atheistic and non-orthodox movement in Indian history (Mardia, 1996). Jainism dates back to approximately 872 BCE, however further development of Jainism and its essential teachings are credited to Mahavira, who was born in 559 BCE (Mardia, 1996). Jainism rejected the cast system that privileged Brahmans, the idea of a supreme leader who would bestow spiritual liberation, and the idea of God as a creator who sustains and destroys the universe and provides redemption to people (Mardia, 1996). Instead, the teachings of Jainism state that a person must find their own salvation through the three jewels which are: right faith, right knowledge and right conduct. Jainism did believe in various gods who existed in different levels of existence, however they did not believe that these gods were responsible for a person’s liberation. According to Jainism, a perfected being is one who has purified his soul through his own efforts, which leads them to liberation (moksha). Jainism believes in disciplined non-violence towards all living creatures (Mardia, 1996).

Buddhism is the next major philosophical system of the Epic age and was based on the teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha was born around 623 B.C and previous to his enlightenment was named Gautama (Mahathera, 1982). Gautama was an Indian prince who wanted to realize how to attain freedom from suffering. Once Gautama had attained enlightenment, he was called the Buddha and he spread his teachings across India (Mahathera, 1982). Buddha is said to have lived before the composition of the Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras, however traces of the yogic tradition are found within the Vedas and Upanishads, which predates Buddhism (Tandon, 1995). Buddhism shares some similar concepts from Indian philosophical systems, such as the idea of karma (cause and effect relationships), however rejects some of the orthodox philosophical concepts, such as the emphasis on the importance of a personal god (Loy
The Buddha taught that the cause of suffering (dukkha) is not due to our disobedience towards god, a sin we have committed, but rather due to our ignorance and denial of our essential nature as the ‘non-self’ (anatman) (Loy, 1992). The Buddha took more of an atheistic approach, however the Buddha did not reject theism, but expressed that the focus on gods, metaphysics or rituals were not helpful in understanding our suffering and to achieving liberation (Loy, 1992). It was through cultivating non-dual awareness, through meditation practices, that one could recognize their essential nature as the non-self and thereby allow the grip of the ego (false identifications that create a sense of separate self), to “burn itself out” (Loy, 1992, p. 157). The Buddhas teachings on the causes of suffering and how to overcome suffering continues to be relevant in modern psychology and its understanding of mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression (Loy, 1992). The foundational teachings of the Buddha can be summarized by his first discourse on the four noble truths, which are: 1. The truth of suffering 2. The truth of the cause of suffering 3. The truth of the end of suffering and 4. The truth of the path that leads to the end of suffering, which are teachings of the noble eightfold path (Sharma, 1962).

Two major branches of Buddhism developed after the teachings of the Buddha, these were Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism (Williams, 2009). Theravada Buddhism is a collection of the teachings of the Buddha, collectively called the Pali Canon, and were written by monks in Sri Lanka in the Pali language (Williams, 2009). Theravada Buddhism is a strict and monastic branch of Buddhism that is said to hold firmly to and follow the original teachings of the Buddha (Williams, 2009).

New sutras were added to the Buddhist canon by reformists who were in opposition to the hierarchal approach in Buddhist which gave priority to monks and left out the lay people (Williams, 2009). This movement was called Mahayana Buddhism and included the belief that enlightenment could be attained by a layperson and in this lifetime. Mahayana Buddhism also
focused on compassion, insight and the attainment of Bodhisattva—a person who devotes
themselves in service to others and the world (Williams, 2009). The teachings of Mahayana
Buddhism were written in Sanskrit. One of the most influential scriptures that elaborate on the
Mahayana tradition is the *Mulamadhyamakakarika* (fundamentals of the middle way) written by
a Brahman named Nagarjuna from regions of Southern India (Garfield, 1995). This scripture
teaches about the middle path, which explains that one should not side on extremes, such as
extreme absolutism or nihilism, but rather find the middle point between extremes, the middle
path towards liberation (Garfield, 1995). The concept of *Shunya* or emptiness of all phenomena
and the essential nature of all things, is also described in the Mulamadhyamakakarika scriptures
(Garfield, 1995).

2.1.4 The Sutra Period (200 BCE-600 CE)

The formulation of the six schools or systems of Indian philosophy were established
during the Sutra time period between 200 BCE-600 CE (Radhakrishnan & Moore, 1967; Shri,
2017). The six major philosophical traditions of Indian philosophy are: *Nyaya, Vaisheshika,
Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa* and *Vedanta*. These philosophical traditions are called *Sadarshanam*,
meaning ‘six visions of truth’ in Sanskrit (Bhadreshdas, 2016). These six schools of Indian
philosophy were influenced by teachings of the Vedas and the Upanishads.

These major philosophical scriptures are described as orthodox, and are also termed
*Astika*, which in Sanskrit means the acceptance of the Vedic scriptures as the authority of
wisdom. Within these six schools of thought, a majority take a theist view, discussing the concept
of God or Supreme being as the Creator, while some do not mention nor reject the notion of God
and are thus neither theistic or atheistic (Bhadreshdas, 2016; Radhakrishnan & Moore, 1967).
These philosophical traditions have in commonality their emphasis on the attainment of liberation
and freedom (moksha), however the methods and means to achieve liberation differ among these
philosophical traditions (Bhadreshdas, 2016). The six Indian philosophical systems describe their views on the creation of the world, existence and the nature of Brahman, and the nature of the individual soul (jiva) and matter (Bhadreshdas, 2016).

The first major system of Indian philosophy, Samkhya philosophy, is thought to be one of the oldest philosophies within the six schools of Indian philosophy and was founded by the sage Kapila (Radhakrishnan & Moore, 1967). The originating date of Samkhya is uncertain, however the most popular commentary on Samkhya Philosophy, called the *Samkhya Karika*, composed by Ishvara Krishna, is said to date back to the 5th century CE (Durant, 1997; Shri, 2017). Samkhya philosophy has dualistic views and considers two eternal realities: the Purusha (the Soul, which is devoid of qualities) and Prakriti (matter, or nature) (Bhadreshdas, 2016; Radhakrishnan & Moore, 1967). Prakriti is the active principle through which all of the material and psychic world manifests. The Purusha is the soul of all of creation, which is attributeless and in a state of witnessing Prakriti (Bhadreshdas, 2016). According to this school of philosophy, liberation is achieved when a person no longer confuses Prakriti (matter) as their true self but recognizes themselves as both the Purusha (Soul) and Prakriti (matter) (Bhadreshdas, 2016). The liberated person has differentiated Purusha from Prakriti. It is from Samkhya that the Tri Guna theory emerges, which views Prakriti (matter) as having three main qualities: Tamas (inertia or heaviness), Rajas (activity and movement), and Sattva (purity, the state of balance of the gunas) (Shri, 2017). Samkhya does not discuss the concept of God, a separate Supreme being, nor does it refute the existence of God. Some scholars would say that Samkhya is oriented towards an atheism while other scholars argue that it is neither theistic nor atheistic (Bhadreshdas, 2016).

The Nyana school of Indian philosophy focuses on the use of logic and analysis to reach the state of realizing ones ultimate nature. Nyana means that by which the mind reaches a conclusion. Nyana philosophy emphasizes the power of logic thinking (Sharma, 1962; Shri,
2017). The founder is Sage Gautama, and his Nyana Sutras were written approximately 200 BCE. Nyana philosophy attributes God as the creator and follows theism (Sharma, 1962).

The Vaisheshika philosophy is the next major Indian philosophical system and examines physics, metaphysics and logic (Sharma, 1962; Shri, 2017). Its approach is naturalism, and its teachings expound that all of life is made up of atoms (Dadu, 2016). Vaisheshika is also theist due to its belief in a spiritual substance; the soul and God (Bhadreshdas, 2016). The founder of Vaisheshika is considered to be sage Kanāda, the author of the Vaisheshika Sutra, written sometime after 300 BCE (Bhadreshdas, 2016).

The Yoga Sutras were the next major development in Indian philosophy and was founded by sage Patanjali and composed approximately between 200 BCE- 200 CE (Wood, 2003). Although some scholars say that this yogic system in Indian history arose during the time of the Buddha (Durant, 1997). Some scholars speculate that Patanjali was not a single person but rather a group of sages that contributed to the development of the Yoga Sutras (Wood, 2003). Kapilas Samkhya School of Indian thought had a significant role on the development of Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras (Burley, 2007; Sharma 1962). The Yoga Sutras drew upon the dualistic views of Samkhya philosophy, such as using the terms Purusha and Prakriti to describes it philosophy (Burley, 2007). Samkhya and Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras often go hand in hand due to their similarities in the fundamental understanding of reality (Burley, 2007; Sharma, 1962). The difference between Samkhya philosophy and the Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras is that Samkhya philosophy emphasized philosophy and analysis, while the Yoga Sutras placed emphases on practices to achieve liberation (Sharma, 1962). The Yoga Sutras describes a unified system, with eight processes called the eight limbs of yoga, which incorporate ethics, breath practices, and various meditation practices. The Yoga Sutras are also theistic since they refer to “ishvara” which means God or the Creator in Sanskrit (Sharma, 1962).
The next major Indian philosophical tradition is Mimamsa philosophy. The system of Mimamsa focused on the attainment of enlightenment through the correct performance of Vedic rituals and actions (dharma) (Sharma, 1962). It provides guidelines and rules for interpreting the Vedas and philosophical rationales for observing Vedic rituals. The sage Jaimini is credited as the main founder of Mimamsa tradition, and he wrote the scripture Mimamsa Sutra around the end of the 2nd century CE (Gachter, 1990).

Vedanta marks the next major school of Indian philosophical traditions. Vedanta is credited to Sage Badarayana, also referred to as Vyasa, and arose during around the time period of 500 BCE-200 BCE (Durant, 1997; Potter, 1981). Vedanta is the efforts of Vyasa to simplify the Upanishadic philosophy. Sage Vyasa composed 555 sutras or versus in a Vedic text called the Brahma Sutras (Potter, 1981; Vireswarananda, 1936). The principle concepts of Vedanta includes the teachings on the nature of reality, the relationship between Brahman and the individual soul (atma), causes of suffering and bondage, and how to achieve liberation through recognizing the illusion of form (Bhadreshdas, 2016; Vireswarananda, 1936). Within Vedanta emerged different schools of Vedantic thought, for example Advaita Vedanta, which practices nondualism and believes in the oneness of existence (Potter, 1981). In Advaita Vedanta there is no reality separate from Brahman, everything is Brahman only (Potter, 1981). Other Vedantic traditions, such as Dvaita Vedanta, takes a more dualistic stance and views that reality involves various levels of existence (Sharma, 1981). A number of commentaries have been written on sage Vyasa’s Brahma Sutras and its 555 versus due to the complexities of these versus. The most famous commentaries on the Vedas were written by Shankaracharya, Ramnujacharya and Madhavacharya (Shri, 2017).

The six Indian philosophical systems, along with the major scriptures and sutras of the Vedas, Upanishads and Puranas, have contributed to the development of how Hinduism is practiced today, specifically its theistic orientation. For example, beliefs about God, the nature of
creations and our relationship to God, and concepts such as karma, ishvara (personal God),
dharma, along with practices such as devotion, worship towards various gods through rituals and
prayers, and association with temples, can be attributed to some of the teachings within these
major Vedic, Upanishadic, Puranic and Astika scriptures (Shri, 2017). This theistic orientation in
Hinduism has received criticism from groups that are atheists or spiritual but not religious due to
its focus on rituals, mythology, and the worship of many gods (Quack, 2012). Even during
ancient Indian history there have been sages and scholars who have rejected theism and the
worship of many gods, for example, the non-orthodox and the heterodox systems of Indian
philosophy (Charvaka, Jainism and Buddhism) (Quack, 2012). In the modern era there are groups
of people who identify as spiritual but not religious. Within spirituality there is a focus on one’s
interior life, finding personal meaning and truth, emphasizes on mind-body-spirit well-being,
personal transformation and appreciation for the transcendental aspects of reality and mysteries
of creation (Hill, 2001). Whereas in religious traditions there is a greater outward focus, such as
pleasing god through rituals, prayers and other means. Some people have greater affinity towards
the spiritual teachings within ancient Indian philosophy and tend to reject the religious aspects
(Quack, 2012). While other groups associate with the religious aspects of Hinduism and place
less focus on its spirituality. There also exist groups who integrate both the spiritual and the
religious aspects of Indian philosophical traditions (Berry, 1992).

2.1.5 Classical Yoga Period (200 BCE-200 CE)

The teachings and approaches within the Yoga Sutras are commonly used in current yoga
education and training programs (Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008). The Yoga Sutras are said to be
one of the most relevant approaches to yoga for today's society because of the clarity of
instruction, the theory and explanation of human psychology and human suffering, and the
practical tools and techniques for practicing yoga (Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008). For this reason,
the current literature review will go into more depth to explore the major concepts and teachings of the Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras. Patanjali’s collection of yoga sutras are exalted as one of the greatest works on yoga because of its great clarity, organization, and precision in yogic methodology. The Yoga Sutras are often referred to as the “yoga manual for the West (Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008). The Yoga Sutras describe yoga as “Ashtanga yoga,” which means the eight limbs of yoga. These eight limbs of yoga are eight specific aims and practices of yoga that Patanjali speaks about as being the full integrated practice and essence of all of yoga (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 2001; Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008).

The Yoga Sutras are broken down into four main chapters: “Samadhi Pada” (the Aim of Yoga), “Sadhana Pada” (the Practice of Yoga), “Vibhuti Pada” (the Resulting Esoteric Powers) and “Kaivalya Pada” (Liberation) (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 2001). The following section will briefly review each chapter and provide its key yogic teachings and practices.

The Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras begin with a discussion on the particular obstacles that a seeker encounters on their spiritual journey. The first chapter of the Sutras, “Samadhi Pada” (the Aims of Yoga), states that the main obstacles on the spiritual path are sickness, mental laziness, doubt, lack of enthusiasm, slothfulness, craving for sensory pleasures, false perception, despair caused by failure to concentrate and unsteadiness in concentration (Woods, 2003). Patanjali then elaborates on the characteristics that allow one to overcome these obstacles. These characteristics are faith, energy, discipline, non-attachment and spiritual discrimination (Woods, 2003). Patanjali offers meditation techniques that can help bring the mind into greater concentration and stillness to overcome these spiritual hurdles. Some of these meditation techniques include focusing on one’s truth (tattva), attending to the inward flow of breath (prana), steady attention to the subtler levels of sensation, turning one’s attention to those things that do not incite attachment, and meditating on the longings of the heart (Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008).
In the next chapter, “Sadhana Pada,” Patanjali goes deeper into exploration of the major innate psychological obstacles that lead to all mental disturbances, suffering and forgetfulness of our true essence. These psychological obstacles are referred to as the Kleshas (Narayanan, 2010).

The five Kleshas are:

- **Avidya**, ignorance of one’s true nature;
- **Asmita**, egoism, a sense of separation and duality;
- **Raga**, attachment to the world of form, including our mind and body and “that which dwells upon pleasure”;
- **Dvesha**- aversion and hatred, “that which dwells upon pain”; and
- **Abhinivesha**, fear of death, which means clinging to life and one’s identity (Narayanan, 2010; Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008, p. 335).

Patanjali then proceeds to provide an overview of Ashtanga yoga, which is translated to “the eight limbs or steps to yoga” (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 2001). The eight limbs are steps for the seeker to follow in order to reach the ultimate stage of yoga, **Samadhi**, which is the state of union with our true divine nature. Patanjali explains that by mastering one step or limb, this would naturally lead to the next step or limb of yoga (Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008).

Although these eight limbs of yoga are described as steps or sequences, the practice of Ashtanga yoga involves integrating these parts together, which contributes to the greater whole (Maehle, 2006). The sequences work as a process, and as a practitioner moves onto the next sequence or step the previous steps are also integrated (Maehle, 2006). For example, when a practitioner is at the sixth stage of Ashtanga yoga, which is concentration (dharana), the previous steps of following moral or ethical codes continue to encompass the practitioners yogic practices.
Ashtanga yoga touches upon the social, physical, energetic, psychological, and spiritual spheres of human life. Some of the important concepts and practices of yoga that are widely practiced today and known as the hallmarks of yoga are mentioned in Ashtanga yoga practices. The following section provides a brief overview of Ashtanga yoga, the eight limbs of yoga, as discussed in Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras.

The first and second limbs of yoga, the yamas and niyamas: The yamas and niyamas are moral codes of conduct and observances for “right living.” By following these moral codes, one can live a life of truth, integrity and harmony (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 2001). The Yama and Niyamas discuss how practitioners can have a healthy relationship with their surroundings, with other people in their lives, and with themselves (Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008). These moral conduct are the first practices of Ashtanga yoga because without living in accordance to these principles, this can lead to destructive habits and limiting patterns of behaviours, which creates obstacles towards the fruition of other yoga practices (Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008). There are six major moral conducts of behaviours described as the Yamas. They include the following: non-harming (ahmisa), truthfulness (satya), non-stealing (asteya), regulation of sexual conduct (brahmacharya), and lack of greed or non-acquisitiveness (aparigraha) (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 2001). The Niyamas are the complements to the Yamas and include the following: purity of the body and mind (shaucha); contentment (santosha); austerity, such as disciplined spiritual practices (tapas); the study of the sacred scriptures and self-study (svadhyaya); devotion or awareness of the divine presence (Ishvara- pranidhana) (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 2001).

By following these codes of conduct and behaviors for right living, it is said that one can cultivate a greater steadiness of mind and a positive relationship with life, others, and oneself, which is the first requirement before a practitioner can undertake more intense yogic practices (Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008).
The third limb of yoga, asana: Asana means posture and in Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras refers to developing a seated posture that brings ease for the purpose of meditation (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 2001; Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008). Later in yogic history, the word asana has come to mean much more than seated posture. Asana as we know it today refers to a series of yogic postures that bring about health and well-being to the mind, body and spirit (Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008).

The fourth limb of yoga, pranayama. Pranayama is the regulation of the breath through various breathing techniques, which allows for the steady flow of energy called prana (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 2001). The yogic literature states that all of life consists of prana, (the subtle energies and vital life force energy), and prana moves through subtle channels and pathways in the human body called nadis (Frawley, 199). Nadis are invisible to the naked eye but can be felt and experienced. When the subtle energy is flowing well through these nadis it is said that a person is in good health and energy. When the flow of energy is blocked and there is stagnation in any one of the nadi channels, a person is said to experience mental, emotional and physical disease and illness (Frawley, 1999).

Pranayama is known to be a very important aspect of yogic traditions because it is through correct breathing that the body’s energies can become regulated, harmonized, and purified (Frawley, 1999; Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008). Pranayama directly affects the body’s subtle energies, the mind, and the nervous system. In modern science, it has been found that yogic breathing practices can calm the nervous system and reduce anxious and stressful feelings (Popovic & Nikic, 2016). For example, the various practices of pranayama, such as alternate nostril breathing and deep rhythmic breathing have been found to reduce blood pressure, sympathetic nervous system activity and stress, and increase parasympathetic activity, improve
resting heart rate and overall cardiovascular health (Bhagat, Kharya, Jaryal, & Deepak, 2019; Popovic & Nikic, 2016; Sharma et al., 2013).

*The fifth limb of yoga, pratyahara.* Pratyahara is the next step that naturally occurs after pranayama. Pratyahara refers to the withdrawal of our five senses from the external world of form, and the redirection of our attention towards our inner world (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 2001). Pratyahara is the process of inward attention and focus. The mind and our five senses stop engaging in the external world for a short period of time. This allows for the mind to become still and to no longer be occupied by external distractions. In pratyahara, the practitioner begins to make contact with their internal world (Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008).

*The sixth limb of yoga, dharana:* When scattered light becomes collected into one stream, it becomes like a laser – a sharp pointed stream of light. Similarly, in dharana practitioners draw their consciousness and attention, which are often scattered, to one single point of focus. Dharana means concentration, and it is the process of holding or fixing the attention of the mind onto one place, point, or object (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 2001; Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008).

*The seventh limb of yoga, dhyana:* Dhyana means meditation, it is sustained concentration. When one is able to sustain dharana it becomes dhyana. In dhyana, attention is on the single object, mantra, or experience for a sustained period of time (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 2001; Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008). Whereas dharana is a process, dhyana is a state of mind.

*The eighth limb of yoga, samadhi:* The last limb of yoga described in the Yoga Sutras is samadhi. Samadhi is a higher state of meditation that involves deep absorption and the experience of oneness with the object or experience of attention (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 2001; Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008). Some describe it as a meditative absorption or trance. There are also
further stages of samadhi described by Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 2001).

The last two chapters of Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras are “Vibhuti Pada” (the resulting esoteric powers) and “Kaivalya Pada” (final liberation) (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 2001). “Vibhuti Pada” discusses the markers that signify a practitioner’s progression on the yogic path (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 2000; Woods, 2003). The natural consequences of gaining mastery over one’s mind is the ability to tune the mind into higher sensory perceptions and achieve psychic accomplishments, called siddhis (Whicher, 1998). Patanjali reminds us that the attainment of supernatural powers is not the goal of yoga and one must not get distracted but continue one’s journey to reach the ultimate state of liberation (Whicher, 1998).

In “Kaivalya Pada” (final liberation), the last chapter, Patanjali provides insights into the higher stages of liberation (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 2001). He begins by discussing the law of karma (the law of cause and effect), which keeps people in the perpetual cycle of birth and death and hinders their ultimate liberation. The ultimate liberation is freedom from re-birth and therefore unification with the Absolute (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 2001). The law of karma says that there are consequences—either in this lifetime or the next—for every action conducted (Sabhlok, 2007). Until all a person’s karma has been exhausted, that individual will continue to be born on this earth (reincarnation). Patanjali explains that the individual who has achieved kaivalya, the highest liberation, no longer accumulates karma and thus is free from the laws of karma (Whicher, 1998). Thus, the path and aim of yoga is the experience of ultimate freedom, freedom from the cycles of birth and death.

2.1.6 Post-Classical Yoga Period (600 CE-1700 CE)

Previous to the post-classical yoga period, there was limited emphasis or development of yoga postural practice. In Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras yoga posture meant ‘seated posture’, and asana
was described as ease, steadiness, and cessation of effort (Maehle, 2006). No other elaboration of yoga asanas were given in the Yoga Sutras (Maehle, 2006). Following the classical yoga time period, there was an evolution of yoga postural practice, where yoga asanas began to develop.

Hatha Yoga, the science of breath and the subtle energy systems of the body began to emerge during this post classical yoga period (Hirschl, 2010). Hatha comes from the word *ha*, which means *sun*, and *tha*, which means *moon* (Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008). Thus, Hatha Yoga refers to the dual natures within a human being: the solar and lunar nature, the yin and yang, the inner masculine and feminine forces, becoming integrated as one (Hirschl, 2010). Hatha Yoga attempts to unify these inner dualities, the inner sun and the moon. The Hatha Yoga tradition explains that by merging these opposite natures this allows for a great inner awakening and the realization of our true nature (Hirschl, 2010).

According to Indian spiritual teachings, *kundalini energy* is the most potent and sacred energy, and it rests at the base of the spine (Satyananda, 1984). The kundalini, which is full of latent powers, when fully awoken, rises up from its dormancy, passes through all the psychospiritual energy centers in the body (called the chakras) and reaches the sahasrara chakra (the psychospiritual energy center located at the crown of the head). When the kundalini energy reaches the sahasrara chakra this allows for an awakening into a transcendental state of consciousness (Satyananda, 1984). Hatha Yoga looks at how we can work with and redirect the prana (life force energy) through the energy pathways within the body to achieve inner purification and awakening of the kundalini energy (Hirschl, 2010). Some of the methods of Hatha Yoga include physical posture practice (asana), breath work (pranayama), hand gestures and locks (mudras and bhandas), purification and cleansing techniques (shatkarma), sense withdrawl (pratayahara), concentration (dharana), meditation (dhayana), and meditative absorption (samadhi) (Muktibodhananda, 1998; Satyananda, 1984; Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008).
It is in Hatha Yoga that an elaboration of yoga asana practices, and methods of achieving health and purification are provided. Most of the Western practices of yoga derive from the Hatha Yoga tradition (Riley, 2004).

Three major influential texts that contributed to the developed of Hatha Yoga between the time period of 6th century CE to 17th century CE, was the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, by sage Svatmarama, the *Gheranda Samhita* by sage Gheranda and the *Goraksha Samhita* by Yogi Gorakhnath (Mallinson, 2004; Muktibodhananda, 1998; Riley, 2004; Vishnuswaroop, 2014). Lord Shiva, known as the great Yogi and God, is said to have first provided the teachings of yoga asana to the sages (Vishnuswaroop, 2014). The Goraksha Samhita, a Hatha Yoga text, states:

> Of the eighty four hundred thousand asanas, one hundred thousand have been mentioned.

Thus lord Siva created eighty-four asanas (Vishnuswaroop, 2014, 1:1.8). This verse within the Goraksha Samhita states that Lord Siva described that there are eighty four hundred thousand yoga asanas, as many living creatures on the earth, however of these several thousand yoga asanas, eight four are considered most important. The eighty four yoga asanas have been outlined in various traditional Hatha Yoga Text (Feuerstein, 2011; Vishnuswaroop, 2014).

A major influential Hatha Yoga text, the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, provides techniques to guide the practitioner towards liberation. This text is divided into four chapters. The first chapter, “Asana”, deals with postural yoga practices (Muktibodhananda, 1998). A total of fifteen yoga postures were described in the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, along with a detailed description of the effects that these yoga postures would have on the body and mind (Muktibodhananda, 1998). The Hatha Yoga Pradipika describes how the life force energy, called prana, is cultivated and directed throughout the body by using yoga postures, in order to bring about health and purification of the body and mind (Muktibodhananda, 1998). Whereas previously the only mention of asana was
from Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras, where asana was referred to as seated posture, the Hatha Yoga Pradipika was a step towards developing the system of yoga postural practice.

The next chapter, “Shatkarma and Pranayama”, was concerned with purification techniques. Cleansing practices were introduced to purge the body and mind of its impurities and to allow the nadis’ (the subtle energetic pathways in the body), to be cleansed and purified (Muktibodhananda, 1998). The text explains that doing these purification practices would lead to the preparation of the body and mind for the awakening of kundalini energy (Vishvketu & Panwar, 2008). The third chapter, “Mudras and Bandhas”, elaborated on the practice of certain physical gestures and locks (performance of physical retention, binds, and releases) to support the awakening of the kundalini energy (Muktibodhananda, 1998). The last Chapter, “Samadhi”, deals with how to enter the state of unity and bliss, by methods that support the absorption of the mind (Muktibodhananda, 1998). For example, using breath and hearing the inner sound called ‘nada’, were some of the practices described in the Hatha Yoga Pradipika to help the practitioner achieve samadhi (Muktibodhananda, 1998). The Hatha Yoga Pradipika differs in its approach to enlightenment from previous Indian philosophical traditions, with its greater focused on health and methods of purification for the body and mind (Feuerstein, 2011). The Hatha Yoga tradition draws upon the elements of the Tantric traditions, specifically the emphases on kundalini energy (Hirschl, 2010).

The Gheranda Samhita, another major Hatha Yoga text of the time, is divided into seven chapters and touches upon cleansing techniques for purification, yoga postures, physical hand gestures, methods of concentration, breathing techniques, meditation techniques and the attainment of samadhi (Mallinson, 2004). It is in the Gheranda Samhita where a greater number of yoga asanas were expounded (Mallinson, 2004). In this text sage Gheranda explains that although there are as many yoga postures as living species on the earth, the most important are 34
yoga asanas. The development and addition of yoga asanas continued in other ancient Hatha Yoga texts, for example, the Goraksha Samhita, which states that there are 84 major yoga asanas (Vishnuswaroop, 2014).

2.1.7 Concluding statement on ancient yoga history and its practices

The purpose of this section was to provide a comprehensive overview of the history and practice of yoga, as taught in ancient Indian contexts. Yoga involves more than just physical posture practice: it is also a lifestyle of mental, physical, and spiritual discipline that caters to all dimensions of life. It is by understanding the holistic nature and vastness of yoga that we can appreciate yoga as a way of life. This section has set the stage to explore the modern evolution of yoga and its movement into the Western world.

2.2 The Evolution and Journey of Yoga into the Western World

The development of modern yoga styles and its movement into the Western world can be credited to the many yoga masters and spiritual gurus of India, most notably Swami Vivekananda, Swami Sivananada, Swami Rama, Krishnamacharya, Paramahansa Yogananda, B.K.S Iyengar, Pattabhi Jois, and T.K.V. Desikachar (Desai, 2004). These yoga masters dedicated their lives to developing and disseminating the teachings of yoga worldwide (Desai, 2004). There are also notable yoga masters who were born in the West and who have also been instrumental to spreading the knowledge of yoga into the Western world, such as Indra Devi (Desai, 2004).

The evolution of the many yoga asana practices we see today and how yoga is practiced worldwide can be credited to Krishnamacharya, who was born in 1888, South India (Mohan & Mohan, 2010). Krishnamacharya is known as ‘the father of modern yoga’ for his contribution of
refining and developing a system of yoga that has influenced almost all styles and practices of yoga that have emerged in the 19th and 20th century (Mohan & Mohan, 2010).

Krishnamacharya spread his teachings and practices of yoga across India. His contributions to the evolution of yoga included his emphases on the refinement of yoga postures, providing sequencing in yoga asana practices, prescribing therapeutic value to each yoga posture and also integrating pranayama with yoga asana practice (Mohan & Mohan, 2010). Krishnamacharya also taught yoga as a therapy, where he would prescribe various yoga practices for people with illness. His approach to yoga was that it should be appropriate to the individual’s needs (Mohan & Mohan, 2010). He highlighted the therapeutic aspects of yoga practices, which has largely influenced how yoga is now being used as a therapeutic intervention. His famous disciples, Jois, Iyangar, Devi, and Desikachar further developed the practices and styles of yoga and are credited for distributing the knowledge and practice of yoga into the Western world (Mohan & Mohan, 2010).

Another influential yoga master and disciple of Krishnamacharya, who is largely credited for bringing the tradition of yoga into the West, is B.K.S Iyengar (Palkkivala, 2017). Iyengar was born in 1918. He studied anatomy, psychology and physiology, which led him to develop a system of yoga that emphasized anatomical details and alignment of each yoga posture, breath control, engaging the mind throughout the yoga practice and yoga as a therapy. Iyengar developed a style of yoga called Iyengar Yoga (Iyengar, 1976; Palkkivala, 2017). Iyengar made yoga accessible for all people by introducing the use of props, such as blocks, chairs and straps, which supported a person’s individual physical needs and provided greater ease and relaxation of the body, mind and breath during yoga practice (Iyengar, 2008). Iyengar’s method focused on developing strength, flexibility, stability and awareness, and he provided major contributions to the development of therapeutic yoga (Iyengar, 2008).
2.3 Mindfulness in Modern Yoga Practices

The term mindfulness is popular in today’s Western society, and it is associated with Buddhist teachings. Mindfulness has been studied extensively by modern scientific research and has been found to have numerous physical, psychological and emotional benefits. Practicing mindfulness has been found to lead to reductions in anxiety, depression, and symptoms of trauma, and improvements in emotion regulation and positive mood states (Muller-Engelmann, Wunsch, Volk, & Steil, 2017; Rodrigues, Nardi, & Levitan, 2017). The practice of mindfulness can be traced back to the teaching of the Buddha in the Satipathhana Sutra (the discourse on establishing mindfulness) (Analayo, 2004; Ditrich, 2016). Sati means mindfulness and the Buddha had provided practices to teach people how to cultivate mindfulness (Ditrich, 2016). These practices involved attending to the experiences of mind and body. The Buddha taught Satipathhana meditation practices to support practitioners in overcoming suffering and realizing their true nature (Ditrich, 2016). The Satipathhana Sutra comes from the branch of Theravada Buddhism (Analayo, 2004; Ditrich, 2016).

Within the 20th century, mindfulness practices began to make an appearance within the Western world. The American psychiatrist, Jon Kabat-Zinn, born in 1944, studied Buddhist practices with Buddhist monks from the East, and he then brought the practices and teachings of mindfulness into the Western scientific communities (Grant, 2018). Jon Kabat-Zinn found that mindfulness could be helpful for addressing many of the mental and physical challenges that people were experiencing in the Western world (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). He brought the tradition of mindfulness into mainstream mental health practices. Jon Kabat-Zinn is known for his Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Program (MBSR), which incorporates teachings of mindfulness and gentle yoga practices (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). He has authored several books on the topic of mindfulness and mental health (Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Kabat-Zinn, 2005; Kabat-Zinn, 1994).
Many Western mental health therapies now incorporate the teachings and practices of mindfulness (Ditrich, 2016).

The practice of yoga in modern day contexts often includes the integration of mindfulness practices and teachings, for example, the yoga body scan practice which includes the mindfulness practice of attending to body sensations (Beddoe, Yang, Kennedy, Weiss, & Lee, 2009; Salmon, Lush, Jablonski, & Sephton, 2009). However in ancient yogic traditions, there was no mention of mindfulness in the practice of yoga. The traditional practice of yoga included meditation, but the core concepts of mindfulness were part of Buddhist traditions. In modern day contexts mindfulness and yoga are often seen as practices that support one another, and the division between mindfulness and yoga is less pronounced. We currently have programs and classes such as mindful yoga and MBSR that incorporates both yoga and mindfulness (Salmon, Lush, Jablonski, & Sephton, 2009). One of the reasons for this overlap of both traditions have to do with the effectiveness of mindfulness in supporting yoga practices, specifically helping the practitioner to cultivate greater attention, presence, and awareness while practicing yoga (Salmon, Lush, Jablonski, & Sephton, 2009).

2.4 Clinical Research Studies on Yoga for Mental Health

The practice of yoga, as mentioned in the Fraser Institute survey, is gaining popularity in Canada as a commonly used CAM approach (Esmail, 2017). There has been an increase of yoga classes, workshops, retreats, and yoga-related material in North America. A revitalization of the practice of yoga has come to the forefront of the health and well-being industry for several decades. According to a 2013 statistic (Tapper, 2013), there are over 669 studios in the Greater Toronto Area, and it is estimated that this region has more studios per-capita than anywhere else in North America. Furthermore, many fitness centers offer daily yoga classes, and within schools
and universities regular yoga classes are also available to students (Serwacki & Cook-Cottone, 2012; Tapper, 2013).

There is also an increasing number of yoga offerings within the physical health and mental health fields. Hospitals, psychology centers, counselling community centers, and centers for yoga therapy have begun to offer yoga classes to their clients (Bussing, Michalsen, Khalsa, Telles, & Sherman, 2012; Duros & Crowley, 2014; Taylor & McCall, 2017). Programs that gear toward yoga for mental health care, such as MBSR and Trauma Sensitive Yoga, as well as yoga therapy, are now being integrated by hospitals and various treatment programs to support clients and patients going through physical and mental health challenges, such as cancer recovery, mental health addictions, and PTSD (Bussing, Michalsen, Khalsa, Telles, & Sherman, 2012; Taylor & McCall, 2017). The therapeutic benefits of yoga have caught the attention of researchers, and over the last decade there has been a surge of research investigating the impacts and benefits of yoga practices.

There has been an increasing number of research studies looking at the effects of yoga on mental health. A literature review by Jeter, Slutsky, Singh, and Khalsa (2015) found that over a 10-year period there has been a threefold increase on the number of publications on yoga and mental health. Over the last decade, many researchers have examined the therapeutic benefits of yoga. Research studies on yoga have found yoga to be effective for cardiovascular health and respiratory conditions (Bonikowske, Lewis, & Schuver, 2018) chronic pain (Sharma, Perrin, Vaidya, & Chhabhadiya, 2019), neurological conditions (Madhusmita et al., 2019) as well as mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, addictions, and eating disorders (Danielly & Silverthorne, 2017; Khalsa, Greiner-Ferris, Hofmann, & Khalsa 2015; Kinser, Bourguignon, Taylor, & Steeves, 2013; Jeter et al., 2015; Lander et al., 2018). The following section will review some of the recent research studies on yoga for mental health.
Researchers Danielly and Silverthorne (2017) investigated the psychological benefits of yoga for female inmates. Participants included 50 female inmates who all underwent a 10-week trauma-based yoga class. The results of the study revealed that female inmates practicing yoga reported experiencing reductions in levels of depression and stress, and improvements in self-awareness (Danielly & Silverthorne, 2017). The authors conclude that the yoga program looks promising because it helped female inmates reduce levels of depression and stress and improve self-awareness (Danielly & Silverthorne, 2017).

A research study by Nguyen-Feng et al. (2019) tested a 12-week Trauma Sensitive Yoga program for female trauma survivors of partner violence. They found that upon the completion of the program, the therapists and instructors conducting the Trauma Sensitive Yoga program noted significant changes in their clients, specifically increased calmness, decreases in self-judgment, changes in self-awareness, and a greater sense of empowerment. Nguyen-Feng et al. (2019) concluded, “The findings suggest that care providers view the implementation of spiritual mind-body techniques to be beneficial to clients” (p. 41).

In another research study, Khalsa et al. (2015) investigated the effectiveness of a 6-week yoga-enhanced CBT program, called Yoga-Enhanced CBT (Y-CBT) program, on 32 participants with depression who were treatment-resistant toward CBT. The Y-CBT program included integrating yoga and meditation with experiential cognitive restructuring that used CBT interventions (Khalsa et al., 2015). The results of the study revealed a significant decrease in participants’ levels of anxiety, including state and trait anxiety, and significant decreases in reported symptoms of depression and panic (Khalsa et al., 2015). Khalsa et al. (2015) explained that the effectiveness of this program may be due to the fact that practicing yoga, which involves repetitive breathing, invokes relaxation responses, which reduces stress, improves the physiology, and can make the CBT processes more effective (Khalsa et al., 2015).
In summary, current research studies have shown that yoga provides multiple benefits for its practitioner, which include but are not limited to the following: reducing mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, trauma and addictions; improving medical conditions, such as pain issues and cardiovascular health; and enhancing positive physiological states (Bonikowske, Lewis, & Schuver, 2018; Danielly & Silverthorne, 2017; Jeter et al., 2015; Kinser et al., 2013; Khalsa et al., 2015; Lander et al., 2018; Madhusmita et al., 2019; Sharma et al., 2019).

Practitioners of yoga report feeling greater self-awareness, connection with self and others, peacefulness, greater mindfulness throughout the day, and enhanced mood states (Kinser et al., 2013). Forfylow (2011) summarizes the potency of yoga and compares it to the effectiveness of conventional medicine. Forfylow (2011) says that overall yoga is found to have a homeostasis response – balancing hormones, neurotransmitters and total functioning of the body and is “similar to the effects of conventional medicine…[yoga is] an appropriate non-pharmacological clinical intervention for treating anxiety and depression” (p. 141). These studies on yoga encourage mental health professionals and medical professionals to begin considering the integration of yoga into mental health care.

### 2.5 Theories on the Therapeutic Benefits of Yoga

In addition to the research findings on the benefits of yoga, there have been many theories that have emerged on the energetic and psychological aspects of yoga that lead to its therapeutic benefits (Forbes et al., 2011; Frawley, 1999). The mind-body literature suggests that body postures often mirror our mental states (Forbes et al., 2008; Forfylow, 2011). Yoga poses can be understood as keys that unlock certain patterns in the body associated with poor posture and mental health issues. This corrects poor body postures that mirror mental health disturbances and can thus create changes in mental health. For example, people with depression may express a
slumped body position, rounding the back and thus closing the energetic and physical heart center. Yoga postures that facilitate back bends and expand the chest can counteract slump body positions, which may have a direct effect on circulation and elevating mood and psychological states (Cramer et al., 2013b; Forbes et al., 2008). People with persistent anxiety may express hyper vigilance, stress, and unease in their body. Many yoga postures, such as the baby pose, involves relaxing the body and letting go of “work.” This may facilitate for the practitioners a sense of comfort, nurturance, and slowing down, thereby counteracting stress and anxiety responses in the body (Forbes, 2011). Yoga asana also leads to greater body awareness, including awareness of tension in the body. Greater body awareness contributes to a greater sense of body control and confidence, which can lead to reduction in anxiety and other mental health issues (Cramer et al., 2013b).

The multidimensional and holistic nature of yoga is perhaps another reason for its transformational effects on the practitioner. From a yogic perspective, an individual is viewed as a total system and therefore healing is geared toward complete health of the person – their mental, emotional, psychological, energetic, social, and spiritual spheres (Birdee et al., 2008; Dalal, 2011). In an integral yoga class (a yoga class that is aligned with the principles of traditional Hatha Yoga), the physical, energetic, mental, emotional, and spiritual layers of a person are addressed (Frawley, 1999). For example, aligning the flow of breath with posture encourages alignment of the energetic and physical body. Focusing the mind on the present moment integrates the mind and the body. Finally, through introspection and meditation, the mental, emotional, and spiritual spheres are integrated (Frawley, 1999). This holistic nature of yoga— uniting mind, body and spirit, is perhaps one of the reasons why so many people are attracted to yoga and experience numerous benefits from the practice.
2.6 The Limitations of Counselling and Psychotherapy

Over the past decade, the field of counselling and psychotherapy has received criticism from clients and professionals for taking a unitary and limited approach toward mental health (Harris et al., 2016; Moodley & Oulanova, 2011; Wynn, 2015). Counselling and psychotherapy creates demarcations between the body, mind, and spirit. Many clients who utilize counselling and psychotherapy services may not subscribe to such unitary approaches to mental health and for that reason either drop out of therapy too early or do not seek the mental health services that they require (Laungani, 2002; Moodley & Oulanova, 2011). There are some notable limitations in the practice of Western counselling and psychotherapy that have been mentioned throughout the research literature and also by practitioners in the field. These limitations include the following: the use of a medical model approach in therapy, limitations in addressing the role of the body in mental health care, and incompatible views of mental health beliefs with ethnically diverse populations. Western counselling and psychotherapy models are also falling short of adequately addressing the spiritual, religious, and mystical experiences of their clients (Duros & Crowley 2014; Elkins, 2009; Hammer, 2019). The following sections will elaborate on each of these limitations, followed by a discussion on the importance of bringing more holistic-based practices, such as yoga, into the field of counselling and psychotherapy.

The first major limitation in the field of counselling and psychotherapy is the medical model approach that has been “superimposed” upon counselling and psychotherapy (Elkins, 2009, p. 67). Elkins (2009) writes that the medical model in psychotherapy is a “descriptive schema” that has been “borrowed” from the practice of medicine (p. 67). In this conventional Western mental health approach, mental health is looked at from a disease model perspective: clients are seen as having an illness that needs to be ‘cured’ (Elkins, 2009). Bringing this medical model approach to psychotherapy is a limitation because, as Elkins (2009) further describes, “The
[medical] schema does not accurately describe the processes and procedures of psychotherapy and has proven itself to be problematic when superimposed on that field” (p. 67). The medical model uses the disease model of mental disturbances, places mental health issues in rigid frameworks, and sees mental health issues as needing curing. When the medical model view of mental health is placed in counselling and psychotherapy practice, this approach minimizes the many shades of gray as to why some clients come into therapy. Some clients who are seeking therapy are looking for more than what the medical model approach provides. Elkins (2009) explains that psychotherapy fails to account for the large population of clients using psychotherapy for personal growth, well-being, support, guidance, and addressing spiritual issues. Whereas in the past when the field of counselling began to emerge clients came to therapy to treat “mental disorders”. However, there is currently a growing population of clients who are seeking therapy for personal growth, well-being and prevention (Elkins, 2009; Hammer, 2019). Elkins (2009) states, “Thus, whereas psychotherapy had been conceptualized originally by Freud and others as a medical treatment for mental illness, it became, in the 20th century, a cultural phenomenon that arose to address the psychic needs of individuals subjected to the ‘new world’” (p. 75). This “new world” is the changes in society that have occurred since the time of Freud. For example, in North America there is a growing interest in yoga, mindfulness, cultivating well-being and a healthy lifestyle, like eating well, and exploring alternative and complementary lifestyles and approaches (Esmail, 2017). With increasing health concerns such as cancer and depression, a shift in direction of priorities has also emerged for people and includes a focus on prevention instead of curing (Esmail, 2017). Elkins (2009) expressed that psychotherapy plays more than just the function of treating mental disorders, rather it’s a “culturally sanctioned” way for thousands of people across North America to seek “personal counsel in times of distress and a way for them to enhance their personal development as human beings” (p. 74). For this reason,
approaches in counselling and psychotherapy must also evolve to meet the changes, needs and demands of today’s populations. The medical model approach that is still active within the field of counselling and psychotherapy may not be able to fully address these needs of people today who are seeking prevention, growth, self-development, holistic care, and spirituality.

The next major limitation in the practice of counselling and psychotherapy includes the minimization of the role of the body and its physiological processes in mental health care. Recent research has begun to reveal the important role of the body in treating mental health. For example, the body has been found to be affected by trauma, stress, and other emotions (van der Kolk, McFarlane, & Weisaeth, 2007). Deep-seated emotions, such as fear and anxiety, are found to be stored within the body, and therefore successful treatment interventions, especially for trauma, must include the body as well. Van der Kolk et al. (2007b) supports this point when they explain that the physiological consequences of trauma must also be addressed in psychotherapy. Duros and Crowley (2014) also say, “What is known is that trauma will not go away by telling one’s story” (p. 238). There are several reasons why addressing the body should be incorporated into mental health care. These reasons have to do with how the physiology and the brain are connected and the role of the central nervous system in stress, depression, trauma, and other mental health issues. Duros and Crowley (2014) explain that trauma often cannot be resolved solely through interventions that utilize left-brain functions, such as those used in traditional talk therapy. Both the left brain and right brain must be included, since trauma and mental health issues also occur on the unconscious level and deep within the body and brain. Duros and Crowley (2014) state that “once it is understood that a trauma survivor’s symptoms are physiological manifestations of their body’s instinctive responses to defend and protect themselves, one can turn to the autonomic nervous system (ANS) for answers on how to help a client move toward recovery” (p. 239). The importance of including the body in mental health
care supports the practice of body-oriented therapies such as yoga, becoming integrated into counselling and psychotherapy.

The third limitation in the practice of counselling and psychotherapy has to do with addressing the diverse beliefs and cultural differences of clients. Immigration is increasing in Canada, and more people are arriving from cultural backgrounds that subscribe to holistic healing beliefs and approaches (Statistics Canada, 2017; Surood & Lai, 2010). As a result, this is creating a gap between the beliefs and values of mental health care providers and ethnic minority populations (Moodley & Oulanova, 2011). Incompatible health views are leading to “underutilization of mental health care services by many groups, premature termination, or poor outcomes for those who use these services” (Moodley & Oulanova, 2011, p. 90). Moodley and Oulanova (2011) indicate that many individuals within the South Asian community view Western health care practices as “culturally insensitive, discriminating and lacking in cultural competencies and knowledge” (p. 90). The results of the 2016 CAM survey in Canada support this statement, as they found that 79% of Canadians felt that conventional medicine did not have all the answers to their health problems (Esmail, 2017). Half of CAM users reported that CAM approaches had provided them with symptom relief that conventional care was not able to provide them with (Esmail, 2017). This survey also found that from those Ontarians who reported using CAM, 56% of them had used yoga at least once, within the year of filling out the survey, 73% had used some form of relaxation technique, and 79% had engaged in a form of spiritual practice and prayer in 2016 (Esmail, 2017). These results suggest that a majority of CAM users are seeking complementary approaches such as yoga, relaxation, and spiritual practices, to address their personal health and well-being. If the field of counselling and psychology is to gain credibility within a multicultural society and continue as a profession in the future, its practices must adapt to and take into consideration the predominant values and beliefs of that society.
Thus, the present challenge for counsellors and psychotherapists is the movement toward discovering new and innovative ways to meaningfully integrate traditional healing approaches that foster holistic health care and cater to the needs and beliefs of a diverse clientele (Forbes et al., 2008; Ware, 2007).

Another limitation of Western counselling and psychotherapy involves its inadequate framework for addressing the spiritual, mystical, and religious experiences and needs of clients (Hammer, 2019; Laungani, 2002; Saadeh, North, Hansen, Steele, & Peteet, 2018). Some clients who come to therapy are wanting to include in their conversations their issues and experiences with spirituality and religion. For many people, mental health and well-being is intrinsically linked to their connection with God, Creator, or their idea of Source (called by many names, such as Allah, Krishna, Christ, Spirit, etc.) (Hammer, 2019; Saadeh et al., 2018). Research has found that for many people going through difficult life experiences such as cancer, deepening spirituality, faith and religion can play an important part of their healing journey (Salsman, Fitchett, Merluzzi, Sherman, & Park, 2015). Faith and connection to one’s religion and spirituality can give people who are going through trauma and difficult life experiences the hope and strength they need to overcome their adversities (Salsman et al., 2015). Hammer (2019) speaks about how psychotherapy has pushed aside the important role of spirituality and religion in mental health and recovery. Hammer (2019) states that “the function of the soul in psychotherapy has been overshadowed by the focus on the mind” (p. 1). Hammer (2019) explains that psychotherapy has given more importance to the mind and intellect and has ignored the role of the ‘soul’ (the aspect of ourselves connected to a greater whole). This creates challenges for clients who are looking for a therapist that can help them explore, understand, and deepen their connection to religion and spirituality as a part of their growth and mental health care. This limitation of counselling and psychotherapy is especially a concern for clients who treat
spirituality and religion as a priority in their lives. According to Hammer (2019), highly spiritual people are more likely to want to discuss spiritual issues in therapy.

In a large literature review study that explored 64 peer-reviewed journal articles about clients’ expectations of religion and spiritual issues in counselling, the authors concluded that clients had positive experiences when discussing religion and spirituality in counselling, and that counsellors who had greater levels of openness to religion also offered greater allowance and support for their clients in discussing religion and spirituality in session (Harris et al., 2016). In a study by Richards et al. (2018), the researchers surveyed 83 women who were experiencing eating disorders to understand what the role of religion and spirituality played in their recovery. Their research indicated that religion and spirituality impacted the treatment and recovery of their eating disorders (Richards et al., 2018). Specifically, a significant portion of women in the study felt that addressing their religion and spirituality was a key factor and support in their recovery from their eating disorders (Richards et al., 2018). From these research findings, it was concluded that religion and spirituality can be central to mental health and well-being for many clients (Richards et al., 2018). Hammer (2019) supports this point when he says,

Attention to the soul has been allocated to the fringes. If counselling and psychotherapy can widen its approach to include spiritually oriented techniques and orientation, this would benefit a large clientele population looking to address their spirituality, religion and soul connection” (p. 1).

Overall, research literature indicates that many clients going through difficult life experiences and mental health challenges find that addressing spirituality and religion can play a key role in their recovery. Therefore, psychotherapists and counsellors are encouraged to recognize the intersection between mental health and religion and spirituality, and find ways to incorporate these various dimensions of the self into therapy practices. Yoga is a holistic practice
that incorporates the mind, body, and spirit and can address the limitations of Western mental health care.

2.7 Yoga Addresses Limitations of Counselling and Psychotherapy

So far, the research literature discussed above has examined some of the major limitations of Western counselling and psychotherapy approaches. The shifting focus of society toward self-growth, prevention, and holism, and the research findings on the importance of spirituality and incorporating the body in mental health care, indicates that the mental health field needs to diversify and integrate traditional healing approaches that cater to the whole person (Duros & Crowley, 2014; Forbes, 2011; Hammer, 2019; Rioux, 2015). The ancient practice and tradition of yoga has been found to address many of the gaps and limitations of counselling and psychotherapy (Duros & Crowley, 2014; Forbes, 2011; Rioux, 2015). For example, yoga includes the role of the body through postural practice, utilizes relaxation and breathing techniques to create physiological changes in the nervous system, approaches mental health from a holistic perspective, and thereby caters to clientele from diverse backgrounds that subscribe to holistic health beliefs (Danielly & Silverthorne, 2017; Duros & Crowley, 2014; Kamradt, 2018; Khalsa et al., 2015). All these reasons make yoga a viable practice that therapists can consider integrating into counselling and psychotherapy practice.

Many researchers, clinicians and therapists are beginning to acknowledge yoga as a mind-body approach that can help clients to connect to their body, develop greater mindfulness, and improve mental health, thus making the work of talk therapy more successful (Forbes et al., 2011; Wynn, 2015). Duros and Crowley (2014) write that “teaching clients to notice when they are in hyperarousal and to use tools that will activate their PNS are the keys to achieving a sense of peacefulness and wellbeing” (p. 239). This interest in learning about integrating yoga in
counselling and psychotherapy has led many counsellors and psychotherapists to seek out educational and training opportunities related to the applications of yoga for mental health.

2.8 Education and Training Programs on Integrating Yoga into Therapy Practice

The interest of applying yoga therapeutically for clients with mental health issues has been on the rise, with an increasing number of mental health professionals seeking ways to expand their professional practice to include a body-mind care approach (Kamradt, 2017; Wynn, 2015). This call for a greater expansion of mental health services to provide holistic care for clients has led to the emergence of recent research exploring educational and training programs geared toward learning about the therapeutic applications of yoga for mental health care. The following section reviews the existing research on the aspects of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy.

2.8.1 Research on integration

Some research literature has suggested the ways in which therapists can consider bringing yoga into their therapy practice. Although current research examining the integration of yoga in counselling and psychotherapy is limited, a few authors have provided suggestions about the integration process (Duros & Crowley, 2014; Kamradt, 2017). Kamradt (2017) offers perspectives on how yoga can be ethically brought into psychotherapy. He suggests that therapists should acquire sufficient yoga training, such as yoga teachers’ training and yoga therapy training, and also continue engaging in yoga education throughout their practice as a psychotherapist (Kamradt, 2017). Kamradt (2017) believes that this will lead to developing the competencies and skills to successfully teach yoga to clients in therapy practice (Kamradt, 2017). Kamradt (2017) mentions that in the therapists process of integrating yoga into psychotherapy, they should provide education to their clients regarding the benefits, risks, and treatment
approach of yoga in psychotherapy, and obtain consent from clients to practice yoga in psychotherapy. Kamradt (2017) believes that therapists have the responsibility of navigating issues around multiple relationships, i.e., being a psychotherapist and a yoga practitioner for the client.

Other researcher, such as by Duros and Crowley (2014), have also indicated the processes involved in integrating yoga and mind-body approaches into therapy practice. In their article, “The Body Comes to Therapy Too,” Duros and Crowley (2014) wrote about their model called the Collaborative Change Model (CCM) that describes three stages of integrating yoga and other mind-body centered approaches into therapy. Duros and Crowley (2014) mention that the first stage of their model involves developing a safe container for the client, developing a therapeutic relationship, and understanding the client’s issues and goals. Duros and Crowley (2014) express that after this stage has been implemented, clients are then ready to experience mind-body interventions, such as yoga in therapy practice. Research by Kamradt (2017) and Duros and Crowley (2014) provides some direction for counsellors and psychotherapists on the processes involved in integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. However, what this research literature lacks is more elaboration and guidelines on the practice of yoga in counselling and psychotherapy. For example, these research studies do not go into depth regarding the actual processes and practice of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy, such as the therapist’s journey and experiences with integration; rather, they skim the surface and provide gentle pointers. There is limited research available that examines the detailed processes involved in bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. More research is needed in this field of integration.

2.8.2 Education and training programs on integration

As interests in yoga as a viable therapeutic practice is growing, there have been some
notable training programs over the years that provide education and direction on the therapeutic applications of yoga for mental health. Some of the major training programs that support therapists in learning about integration include: Yoga Therapy certification programs, MBSR, and Trauma Sensitive Yoga training program (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Devi, 2014; Emerson, Sharma, Chaudhry, & Turner, 2009). In addition to these training programs, other educational opportunities exist, such as workshops, conferences, classes, and books, that explore the intersection of yoga, psychology, and mental health.

The existing education and training programs on yoga for mental health teach about the therapeutic applications of yoga, specifically the aspects of yoga that address various mental health issues, and how to modify and cater yoga practices to meet the needs of clients with mental health vulnerabilities. Training programs, such as yoga therapy training, offer the qualifications and title of a Yoga Therapist and train its practitioners in the application of therapeutic yoga for physical and mental health issues (Devi, 2014). Many clinicians and psychotherapists have begun to study yoga in more depth to understand how they can begin to incorporate yoga into their professional practice (Forbes et al., 2011). The following section will review some of the popular training and educational programs on yoga for mental health.

*Yoga therapy training program.* Yoga therapy is its own specialized field that has emerged from the broader field of yoga. This field is specifically concerned with the therapeutic applications of yoga to treat various physical, emotional, and psychological issues (Devi, 2014). It differs from the general practice of yoga, which is broader and not specific to addressing mental health issues or catering to clients with mental health vulnerabilities. During a yoga therapy session, the yoga therapist will see clients individually and provide a health assessment to determine the types of yoga techniques and practice that could best address the clients’ health and mental health issues and concerns (Devi, 2014). To become a certified Yoga Therapist requires
training at a yoga therapy school or institute and successfully completing a set of modules and learning objectives. The curriculum involves learning about biomedical and psychological foundations of human functioning, such as major systems of the body (e.g. digestive, circulatory, nervous and the endocrine system), psychology and mental health issue and its classifications, and the philosophy and approaches of yoga to treat various conditions (Devi, 2014; Forbes, 2011). There are various organizations of yoga therapy schools that provide the appropriate training to become a certified Yoga therapist. The length of these training program can include a year or more. Some professionals in the medical and mental health field are becoming certified yoga therapists so that they can better understand how to bring these yogic approaches into their clinical practice.

*Trauma Sensitive Yoga training program.* The Trauma Sensitive Yoga training program teaches participants about how to conduct yoga sessions for populations experiencing trauma and PTSD (Emerson et al., 2009). Participants undergoing this training learn about the changes that occur in the physiology as a result of trauma, and how to modify yoga practices and teachings to address the needs of populations experiencing trauma (Emerson et al., 2009). Adapting yoga practices to address the needs of clients with trauma involve fostering safety, trust, and empowerment in clients as they practice yoga (Emerson et al., 2009). The Trauma Sensitive Yoga training program can be in workshop settings that last for a few days or a certification program that can include approximately 300 hours of training (Emerson et al., 2009). Trauma Sensitive Yoga training programs are generally offered to certified yoga teachers or professionals who work in the field of mental health.

*Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program (MBSR).* The MBSR program is generally focused on teaching people the skills of mindfulness to help them cope with various physical, emotional, and psychological challenges (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009). It also includes aspects of
yoga, such as gentle yoga postures, to encourage body awareness, self-awareness, and mindful movement (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009). Mental health practitioners can learn how to provide an MBSR group to clients. The module consists of training in the skills of mindfulness meditation and basic yoga practices. The skills and practices of MBSR promote self-awareness, self-reflection, and self-compassion. The teachings and philosophy within MBSR draw upon Eastern traditions and can be incorporated into one’s daily life (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009).

In summary, there are other programs and courses on yoga that focus on the therapeutic applications of yoga for mental health; however, the training programs reviewed above are some of the more popular training programs for which research has found evidence. Counsellors and psychotherapists who are interested in bringing yoga into their counselling and psychotherapy practice can begin by undertaking existing program and training opportunities related the therapeutic applications of yoga for mental health.

2.9 Statement of the Problem

Counsellors and psychotherapists who want to expand their therapy services and cater to the needs of clients looking for holistic and mind-body care approaches may do so by integrating yoga into their therapy practices. Many counsellors and psychotherapists have begun to study yoga in more depth and acquire training on the use of yoga for mental health care (Forbes, 2011). The draw toward therapists using yogic interventions in psychotherapy and counselling speaks to the potential of yoga to address the mental health needs of clients.

So far much of the existing research on yoga for mental health has looked at the benefits and outcomes of yoga for participants with physical and mental health issues. The focus of yoga research has examined short-term yoga intervention programs lasting for few weeks or months and in-group settings for clinical populations. These studies focus on group yoga practices and do
not address how yoga can be integrated into an individualized one-on-one counselling and psychotherapy practice. There is a paucity of research exploring how counsellors and psychotherapists can integrate yoga into a psychotherapy and counselling practice. For example, Wynn (2015) writes,

Recent research is beginning to substantiate claims that yoga is beneficial for those suffering from PTSD, but the research remains limited and is complicated by the variety within yoga…This issue and others such as the frequency and duration of treatment will need to be investigated with further research (p. 4).

Wynn (2015) indicates that there is limited research addressing the various aspects of integrating yoga into mental health treatment, such as a lack of clarity regarding frequency of yoga practice, duration of yoga treatment, and the most appropriate yoga approaches for trauma and mental health care. Therefore, more research is required to explore the many facets that are involved in the process of bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy practice.

Another limitation in the field of yoga and mental health is that the current existing training and educational programs, such as Yoga Therapy training, Trauma Sensitive Yoga training, and MBSR, do not specifically provide the depth of education needed to understand how to integrate yoga within an existing Western counselling and psychotherapy framework. Yoga therapy training has been criticized for not providing its practitioner with sufficient competencies and training in mental health, and therefore yoga therapists may struggle to support their clients who are dealing with greater mental health challenges (Forbes et al., 2011). Therefore, what remains to be developed is research that specifically focuses on the preparation and processes of counsellors and psychotherapists integrating yoga into an existing framework of counselling and psychotherapy practice. Understanding processes and adaptations of yoga that are required to successfully meet the needs of clients in counselling and psychotherapy has yet to be established.
Without prior information regarding the “how to” of integration, such as the processes and requirements involved to safely and successfully bring yoga into therapy practice, some practitioners may go through “trial and error” in their attempts to bring yoga practices into therapy sessions. Not competently understanding the requirements, ethics, and steps involved in integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy can lead to counsellors and psychotherapists overlooking the contraindication of yoga practices for clients with mental health vulnerabilities. Moreover, they may not prescribe yoga practices correctly, which can potentially put clients at risk. Therefore, as yoga begins to emerge and establish itself as a viable therapeutic intervention, more research is required to examine how yoga can be integrated into psychotherapy and counselling practices (Forfylow, 2011; Kamradt, 2017; Wynn, 2015).

2.10 Major Research Question

It is imperative for therapists who are interested in bringing yoga into their clinical practice to be informed about best practices in integrating yoga into their counselling and psychotherapy practice. The current research study addresses the research gaps mentioned by investigating the processes involved for counsellors and psychotherapists to successfully integrate yoga into their therapy practices. The main research question of the current study is: *What are the processes of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy practice?* In this research study, the *process of integration* is defined as the stages and phases within the therapist’s path and practice of bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. The therapist’s path involves the key processes and aspects that have prepared them to integrate yoga into their therapy practices. The therapist’s practice of integration involves how therapists bring yoga into their counselling and psychotherapy practice.

The current research investigation aims to address the following questions:
• What are counsellors and psychotherapists initial experiences with yoga, prior to integration practice?
• What has led counsellors and psychotherapists to practice the integration of yoga in counselling and psychotherapy?
• What does the process of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy look like?
• What aspects and practices of yoga do counsellors and psychotherapists bring to their clients in therapy practice?
• What are therapist’s experiences with integration, such as the challenges and perceived benefits?

The exploration of these research questions can provide a comprehensive and thorough investigation of the larger processes involved in the integration of yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. Illuminating the path and practices of integration can support counsellors and psychotherapists to understand the key phases and process involved in successfully and safely practicing yoga and counselling and psychotherapy integration with clients.

This research will be conducted by interviewing mental health professionals who are currently practicing the integration of yoga in their counselling and psychotherapy practice. The insights gained from the interviews will be used to develop a theory and framework that will guide counsellors and psychotherapists in the steps and processes involved for integration, such as how to conduct yoga in therapy sessions, what aspects of yoga are brought into therapy practices, and how to address the challenges of integration.

2.11 Rationale of the Study

This research study has important implications for practitioners who are interested in incorporating yoga into their therapy practices. A theory of integration, which offers a framework
on the processes and phases of integration, will ensure that yoga is being integrated in a safe and effective manner. The research generated will also be helpful in guiding mental health practitioners and teachers interested in developing future training programs related to the integration of yoga in mental health care. Lastly, this research will enhance the field of counselling and psychotherapy by broadening the scope of practice to incorporate more holistic approaches to mental health care. This will cater to client populations seeking to address the body, mind and spirit in therapy
CHAPTER 3

Methods

This section outlines the qualitative methodologies used in the current research investigation. A rationale for using qualitative methodologies is provided. This discussion is followed by a description of the specific method of qualitative analysis used, that is, the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Next, an overview is given on the inclusion criteria for research participants, the recruitment methods, description of the sample, and instruments used for data collection. Following this, the data collection procedure is reviewed. This section concludes by a summary of the data analysis process and a discussion on the methods employed for reducing research biases.

3.1 Qualitative Methods Approach: Overview and Rationale

This research employed qualitative research methodologies to study the integration of yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. There are several reasons for choosing this specific qualitative research method. Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, and Namey (2005) assert that “the strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual description of how people experience situations… it provides information on the ‘human side’ of an issue” (p. 11). Qualitative research design seeks to understand a phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants (Khan, 2014; Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams, & Blackman, 2016). It investigates the beliefs, attitudes, and experiences, often in semi-structured interview formats that include a small group of participants (Khan, 2014; Moon et al., 2016). By contrast, quantitative research design aims to discover numbers and measurements and can include a larger sample size. The current research investigation explores the question of how integration occurs, including the processes and elements of integration, and therefore seeks a “complex textual description”
Therefore, a qualitative research design is most suitable for the objectives of this study.

In qualitative research design no prior hypothesis or conclusion is formulated at the onset of the study, and instead a theory is generated from the data (Mack et al., 2005). The current research investigation is aligned with the methods of qualitative design since no prior hypothesis on the process of integration was made. Instead, the researcher examined the participants interviews to develop a theory.

Using qualitative methods is also appropriate for research areas that have had minimal exploration and development of theory (Khan, 2014). In qualitative methods, the prior research questions and objectives are open enough to leave room for further development and discovery. Hammarberg, Kirkman, and de Lacey (2016) support this point when they state, “When researchers invite people to talk about their reflections on experience, they can sometimes learn more than they set out to discover” (p. 499). The current research study started out with little theory, since research and theory on the processes of integration are scarce, and therefore provided enough room for further development and discovery of the processes and theory of integration.

Baum, Deery, Hanlon, Lockstone, and Smith (2009) suggest that “qualitative methods may be a vital forerunner to conducting any quantitative research” (p. 211). Using qualitative methods in the current research investigation offers two benefits: not only does it capture the subtle details and in-depth experiences of integration by participants, but it also offers the field of counselling and psychotherapy the foundations to support future research for using quantitative research methods to study the integration of yoga in counselling and psychotherapy.

In summary, the practice of yoga in counselling and psychotherapy is a new and emerging field of practice, and for the reasons mentioned, a qualitative research method was the most
suitable approach to address current research gaps in understanding the processes of integrating yoga into therapy practice.

3.1.1 The grounded theory approach: Overview and rationale

The current research study uses grounded theory for the interpretation and analysis of data. The grounded theory approach was developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The major tenet of grounded theory is that building theory must be grounded in the data. Specifically, developing the theory occurs through a process of systematic and vigorous analysis of data, where the researcher identifies themes and categories. This allows for the emergence of core themes and theory (Lingard, Albert, & Levinson, 2008). Strauss and Corbin (1998) define grounded theory as follows:

Data collection, analysis, and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another...the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data...grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action (p. 12).

In grounded theory, the researcher tries as much as possible to develop a theory that emerges from the raw data (Khan, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Thus, the grounded theory approach does not support pre-conceived theoretical frameworks. For this reason, the current researcher did not consciously apply any known theoretical framework to the study but was open to discovering what the data would reveal in the research process.

Grounded theory is also based on the process of inductive reasoning. In the inductive reasoning approach, the objectives are to “discover a binding principle, and to construct generalization, relationships and even theories by analyzing the data collected for this purpose” (Khan, 2014, p. 224). The current research investigation used the inductive reasoning approach
by collecting research data from participants and looking for common themes and relationships among participant sharing. This led to the construction of the theory.

There are a few paradigms and approaches of grounded theory that are notable to mention here. The current research investigation uses the most original grounded theory approach, classical grounded theory, by Glaser (1978). Classical grounded theory takes the positivist and objectivist philosophical positions. Positivism assumes that there exists a reality of a phenomenon that a researcher can uncover if he or she can reduce personal biases and let “the data speak” for itself (Singh & Estefan, 2018). The researcher can therefore theoretically remain objective (objectivism). Singh and Estefan (2018) explain:

Glaser’s classical grounded theory can then be suitable for those researchers who (a) believe that there is a reality to be uncovered about a phenomenon of interest, and it is within human capacity to understand the reality, and (b) believe that reality can manifest itself if researchers minimize personal bias and let the data speak (p. 3).

Some researchers have criticized Glaser’s (1978) approach to grounded theory as being naïve, as there is always potential for the research to be biased, since there are multiple ways to view and construct reality (Singh & Estefan, 2018). This argument led some researchers to construct a new version of grounded theory based on a different paradigm. Strauss and Corbin (1990) developed Straussian grounded theory, which has as its foundation postpositivism (Singh & Estefan, 2018). The postpositivist position is described as follows: “acknowledging the possibility of multiple viewpoints, while maintaining an objectivist perspective on a knowable, external reality” (Singh & Estefan, 2018, p. 3). Strauss and Corbin (1990) accepted the influencing factors of the research on the study and the subjective nature of the research process.

The next major movement in grounded theory was the development of constructivist grounded theory by Charmaz (2014). Its philosophical orientation differed from the previous two
grounded theory approaches. Constructivist grounded theory is derived from the root of constructivist theory which states that “concepts are constructed not discovered” (Evans, 2013, p. 45). Constructivism assumes a relativistic approach and emphasizes that reality and meaning are constructed through the lived experiences of participants (Mack et al., 2005). The interaction between the researcher and research participants is the symbolic interaction in which meaning is co-constructed (Fassinger, 2005).

Kolb (2012) writes, “An area of caution is needed when selecting the most appropriate method to help the researcher arrive at a greater understanding and knowledge of the problem” (p. 85). The researcher of this study carefully selected what she believed was the most suitable grounded theory approach and what she determined was also the best fit for her cognitive preferences and philosophical approaches. Classical grounded theory was the grounded theory of choice for this study due to the similarities in perspectives with the researcher as well as the ease, creativity, and flexibility that this grounded theory approach provides during the data analysis process. A brief summary of the major strengths of classical grounded theory and limitations of Straussian grounded theory and constructivist grounded theory are described below to further support the researcher’s decision for selecting classical grounded theory.

The differences in each grounded theory approach has to do with the treatment of data analysis and the literature review (Evans, 2013). The classical grounded theory approach is the original grounded theory and is known for encouraging the researcher to begin with minimal research literature and therefore to keep an open mind throughout the research processes. Its two-level analysis using substantive coding and theoretical coding allows the researcher a certain level of freedom and creativity during data analysis (Evans, 2013). Some researchers find this open approach to data analysis liberating and flexible, and providing “heighted sensitivity and insight” (Heath & Crowley, 2004, p. 146). On the other hand, the Straussian grounded theory
approach has more structure, rigidity, and rules in the data analysis process, with a three-level data analysis process: open coding, axial coding, and theoretical coding (Evans, 2013). This approach puts greater emphasis on deduction and verification in comparison to classical grounded theory (Evans, 2013). Also, Straussian theory encourages a preliminary literature review to seek theoretical support before and during data collection and analysis (Evans, 2013). Straussian grounded theory has received criticism for its rigorous process of data analysis and making the data analysis process more difficult, as Heath and Crowley (2004) explain, “detailed structured explanation maybe at the expense of heightened sensitivity and insight” (p. 146).

The third grounded theory approach, constructivist grounded theory, has been criticized for its ideas regarding objectivity, specifically the believe in a lack of a common reality and the impossibility of eliminating researcher biases (Glaser, 2002). Glaser (2012) writes, “It appears that constructivism is an effort to dignify the data and to avoid the work of confronting researcher bias” (para. 12). Classical grounded theorists differ in their views and believe that by using strategies to minimize human biases, the researcher can indeed generate data that captures the reality of the phenomena under research investigation (Evans, 2013).

For these reasons the current researcher selected classical grounded theory for its strengths in data analysis. Although the researcher does agree with some aspects of the philosophical underpinnings of both Straussian and constructivist grounded theory, she feels that the data analysis process in these grounded theory approaches are not suitable for the current research investigation.

3.2 The Interview Process: Preparation and Conducting

This section describes the processes of preparing and conducting interviews with participants. The first phase involved recruiting participants who met the inclusion criteria. The
second phase involved the researcher contacting eligible participants and providing them with information about the study and the consent form. The final phase in the interview process involved interviewing the participants.

3.2.1 Participants: Inclusion criteria and recruitment

The sample strategy for this qualitative research study was purposeful sampling (Marshal, 1996). Purposeful sampling involves choosing participants that fit certain criteria pertaining to the objectives of the study (Marshal, 1996). A total of ten participants were selected in the study. The reason for this sample size is due to the nature of this research method, which involves a qualitative design and an in-depth interview process. Qualitative research methods support small sample sizes because they prioritize capturing in-depth and rich details of participants’ experiences (Dworkin, 2012). Research literature has shown that in qualitative methods where interviews are employed, participant sample sizes ranging from 8-14 are found to be effective in generating meaningful data (Dworkin, 2012).

Ten participants (nine females and one male) who were actively practicing the integration of yoga in counselling and psychotherapy and satisfied all of the eligibility criteria were recruited for the study. The researcher attempted to equalize the female and male ratio in the study; however, there were far fewer men in Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area practicing the integration of yoga with counselling and psychotherapy. The reasons for such imbalances in gender might be due to the nature of yoga being practiced by more women than men, which is evident in many yoga classes where female practitioners outnumber male practitioners (Lamb, 2006). Furthermore, the practice of counselling and psychotherapy has also been found to have more females than males, and this is evident in counselling and psychotherapy programs where female students outnumber male students (Diamond, 2012). In North America the fields of counselling, psychotherapy and yoga are female dominate (Diamond, 2012; Lamb, 2006), which
may contribute to the reasons why the current research investigation includes an unequal number of female and male participants. The researcher has mentioned this as one limitation in the conclusion section of the study.

The ten participants in this study all fit the inclusion criteria, which included being a Canadian mental health workers (including psychologists, counsellors, social workers, and psychiatrists) who:

1. Completed their training in college or university,
2. Were practicing psychotherapists or counsellors,
3. Used Western counselling and psychotherapy practices alongside yoga practices and teachings in their work with clients (these yogic methods can include: physical posture practice (asana), meditation, breathing techniques (pranayama), yogic lifestyle approach (diet, moral codes) and yoga philosophy),
4. Have worked in the mental health field for at least one year (with experience in integrative practices),
5. Applied integration in individual one-on-one therapy sessions, and
6. Received a yoga teacher’s certification, a certification for yoga therapy training, or who undertook other forms of yoga education and training, such as workshops and classes.

These inclusion criteria helped to ensure that suitable participants were selected who could address the main research question of the study.

Participants were recruited through colleagues referrals, mental health conferences, traditional healing networks, online searches, and the Yoga Therapy Association. An invitation letter was sent to each participant through e-mail or as a handout and introduced the recipient to the study (see Appendix A), and included an attached document that outlined the purpose of the study, benefits and risks of participation, criteria for participation, confidentiality issues,
implications of the study, and a consent section (see Appendix B). Participants were not required
to sign the consent section during this process but would have an opportunity to sign the consent
once the researcher met with the participant and reviewed the consent verbally (before beginning
the interviews). People who were interested in participating or who needed more information
were requested to call or e-mail the primary researcher. For those interested participants,
information was gathered to determine if they met the inclusion criteria. For those participants
who met the requirements of the study, they were then included in the next steps of the study.

3.2.2 Preparation for interviews: The consent and confidentiality process

Interested research participants who wanted more information or who wished to
participate in the study could call or e-mail the primary researcher. After addressing participants’
questions, determining those participants who met the inclusion criteria, and receiving agreement
from those participants to participate in the interview, a meeting time was booked to conduct the
interviews. Five participants met at their workspace office location, two participants met at the
University of Toronto in a privately booked office space, and three participants had a phone
interview because they either lived outside of the Greater Toronto Area or preferred a phone
interview.

Interviews were conducted individually. At each interview, the participants were given a
handout of the consent form (sent as an e-mail attachment for those participants who had a phone
interview) and the researcher reviewed the consent form verbally with them. Informed consent, as
defined by the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists (Canadian Psychological Association,
2000), was obtained from all participants. Those participants in phone interviews had signed and
then emailed the researcher their signed consent form. Within the consent form all participants
were provided with information regarding the purpose of the study, the potential risks and
benefits of participation, right to confidentiality, rights as participants, and rights to withdraw
from the study at any time. A voluntary participation form was signed by clients and kept in their file after participants had fully understood the conditions of the consent form and all their concerns were addressed (see Appendix B for consent form). All interviews were audio recorded.

Interviews were conducted from February to November 2015. Each interview was recorded and transcribed within two weeks of the interview. The information provided by the participants were considered confidential and all efforts were made by the researcher to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Participants’ names were not identified in any report, including the thesis or publication resulting from the current study. Participants were provided with pseudonyms. Minimum demographic information was collected from participants to ensure that participants were not identifiable in the research study (see Appendix C for participant demographic form). During the course of the research, all recordings and transcripts were password protected, and related research information was locked away at a secure and confidential place. Afterwards, all electronic files, recordings, and hard copy material would be deleted or disposed of in a confidential waste.

3.2.3 Instruments used for data collection

Semi-structured interviews between 60-90 minutes were used to gather data from participants. A semi-structured interview questionnaire script was created to ensure that the research method may be replicable by different researchers. It also provided open-ended questions, which allowed for participants to share their own stories in their own words.

Four major questions were included in the interview guide that explored each participant’s path, processes, practices, and experiences of integration. The interview guide was prepared before the interviews to ensure that certain subjects related to the research topics were addressed (see Appendix D for the final interview guide). The interview questions have been developed with the aid of previous research that examined traditional healing practices and
mental health care (Oulanova, 2008; Rai, 2008). The following questions were followed by probes to gather greater details, elaboration, and clarification of responses. These probes and follow-up questions can be found in the interview guide (Appendix D).

- **Question 1**: Describing the path that led participants to integrating yoga in counselling and psychotherapy.
  
  What have your experiences been with yoga, historically? When did you first began to practice? What about presently?

- **Question 2**: Exploring reasons that led participants to integrate yoga in therapy practice.
  
  So, what made you want to go into this work of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy practice, and why?

- **Question 3**: Describing the practice of integration, how it looks like, and how it is done.
  
  Can you tell me a bit about how you integrate yoga and Western counselling and psychotherapy approaches, such as how the integration happens in your sessions?

- **Question 4**: Understanding the experiences of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy.
  
  What have been your experiences in this kind of integration work? Any challenges?

- **Question 5**: Final thoughts and concluding remarks.
  
  Where do you see the future of this integration work going? Any last statements or final points that you want to address before concluding the interview?

**3.2.3.1 Theoretical sampling.** Transcriptions of each interview occurred within two weeks of the interview. As the researcher was reviewing the transcripts and working on coding, memos were kept to note the common topics and aspects of integration that participants were
focusing on. Areas of integration and topics that appeared to be common among participants led the researcher to make slight adjustments to the interview guide to incorporate these topics as questions, specifically as probes in the upcoming research interviews. This process is known as theoretical sampling, and is explained by Butler, Copnell, and Hall (2018) as follows:

Theoretical sampling is a core process of grounded theory. This method of sampling relies on developing concepts in data collection and analysis to guide where, how, and from whom further data should be collected to develop a theory (p. 561).

The researcher began to notice common themes and aspects of integration within the first four transcribed interviews. Therefore, slight revisions to the guide were made to include these new directions in interviews (see Appendix D for the final revised interview guide, and Appendix E for the old interview guide).

3.4 Conducting the Interviews

Each interview began with questions about participants basic demographics (see Appendix C for demographics form). Questions covered participants education, work history, current work settings, and their background training in yoga and yoga qualifications. Description were kept brief in order to protect confidentiality. Participants also created pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality.

After collecting participant demographics interview were conducted using the interview guide (see Appendix D). Efforts were made to conduct the interviews in a conversational style, allowing participants to converse freely but without compromising the specific interview questions to be addressed. During the first part of the interview, participants were asked about their experiences with yoga, such as what led them to yoga, their training, education, and yoga practice, and any related training and education they received specific to yoga for counselling and
psychotherapy integration. In this part of the interview, the researcher wanted to gain an understanding of the influencing factors and experiences that supported participants’ paths toward bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy.

Next, participants were invited to discuss what led them to integrate yoga into counselling and psychotherapy, and probes were used to understand their reasons for integration and what prepared them for it. Participants were also asked to share their views on mental health and if they brought in yoga and Western mental health perspectives in their therapy practice. The purpose of these questions were to understand the reasons for why participants wanted to integrate yoga into counselling and psychotherapy, what had prepared them to do this work of integration, and their general views toward mental health.

The third main question involved asking participants about how they integrated yoga into counselling and psychotherapy practice. In this part of the interview, probes were used to elicit information about the kinds of yoga practices and approaches that they brought into therapy practice. Other probes in this part of the interview included asking clients to provide any examples of using yoga in counselling and psychotherapy with clients while maintaining confidentiality of the client. Participants were asked about what helped them in doing the work of integration.

The fourth main question involved asking participants about their experiences with integration, such as any challenges or limitations of integration practice, how they addressed it, and any benefits of doing an integration practice.

At the conclusion of the interview, participants were asked to share any final thoughts on integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. Participants were asked about what they thought the future of yoga in counselling and psychotherapy was. The last probe included asking participants if they felt that there were additional questions that I could have asked in the
interviews, and any last concluding remarks that they wanted to share. The interview technique of informational and reflective probing was used throughout the interview to support participants in clarifying or elaborating on their ideas.

3.5 Data Analysis Process

Several strategies and phases of data analysis occurred throughout the research process. The following section provides a description of the participant sample, the processes of transcribing the research interviews, and the application of grounded theory methods for data analysis.

3.5.1 Participants: Description of the sample

See Appendix F for a detailed description of each participant’s demographics. Below is a summary describing the overall sample population.

*Educational background:* Three participants had a master’s degree in counselling and psychotherapy, (MA or M.Ed. designation), two participants were trained as medical doctors (M.D. designation), two participants had their Masters of Social Work (MSW) designation, one participant was trained in psychodrama (Director of Psychodrama Certification designation), and one participant was trained in psychotherapy and counselling with an OPC (Ontario Psychotherapy and Counselling Diploma in Psychology). One participant had a certificate for Psychodynamic Studies (CTP designation) and a PhD in Eastern Psychology and Contemplative Studies.

*Registration under governing bodies:* A total of six participants were registered psychotherapists, one participant was registered as a clinical social worker, one participant was a clinical and counselling psychologist, two participant were registered social workers (one was both a registered social worker and a registered clinical social worker), and one participant was a
registered clinical counselor. All participants stated that they were qualified to offer counselling and/or psychotherapy services to their clients.

Number of years in providing mental health services: Three participants had 5-7 years of practice in the mental health field, one participant had 8-10 years of practice, four participant had between 11-15 years of practice in the mental health field, and two participants had over 20 years of practice in the mental health field.

Work setting at time of contact: Nine participants worked in a private practice setting. Of the nine participants one participant worked part time in private practice and part time in a hospital setting within mental health. One participant worked at a counselling center.

Previous work experience: Six participants described having previous experience in a mental health setting that included community centers or health agencies. Of those six, one participant was also a previous schoolteacher. Two participants mentioned that they had previously worked as medical doctors, specifically as emergency physicians (with one participant also having worked as a family doctor). One participant was doing massage therapy (and continues to alongside her psychotherapy practice), two participants had a private practice.

Yoga training and education: Eight participants were certified yoga teachers and had done training in a certified yoga teacher training program. Two participants were not certified teachers but had extensive experience (over 10 years) in the study and practice of yoga, which involved: taking regular yoga classes and attending yoga-related training and education programs.

In terms of education related to the therapeutic applications of yoga for mental health, six participants were yoga therapists and had undergone training in a certified yoga therapy training program. Four participants did not have yoga therapy certification but stated that they had other training related to yoga for mental health, such as Trauma Focused Yoga training, and MBSR,
and attended classes, workshops, and courses related to therapeutic yoga for mental health. Those participants who had yoga therapist training also mentioned receiving additional yoga and mental health training that took the form of either MBSR training, Trauma Informed Yoga training, or related classes, workshops, and courses.

Current engagements with yoga: All ten participants stated having a current yoga practice that they engage in regularly. Eight participants explicitly stated that they continued ongoing yoga education and training, such as taking classes, workshops, and other education and training opportunities in yoga and yoga for mental health.

3.5.2 First level of analysis: Written reflections

The challenge of grounded theory is the researcher’s bias and theoretical ideas, which can interfere with data analysis (Glogowski, 2012). Glogowski (2012) states that,

Documenting all researcher biases such as thoughts, ideas, and theoretical concepts is critical while using grounded theory methodology to increase objectivity and trustworthiness of the data and adding support toward generating new knowledge and theory (p. 59).

This first level analysis in this research study followed these recommendations to minimize biases and increase the trustworthiness and objectivity of the study. This was achieved by the researcher undertaking written reflections immediately after each interview. Personal reflections on the interviews, such as personal impressions during the initial contact with the participant, observations regarding how the participant appeared and any unusual reactions, both from the interviewer and the participant, and personal thoughts and feelings about the interview, were written out in a journal. Furthermore, ideas and insights about the data were recorded as memos and later referred to during the next data analysis processes. These reflections allowed the
researcher to process the interviews and to identify any possible areas of biases and interference with the data, thereby maintaining a level of objectivity.

3.5.3 Second-level analysis: Transcriptions

Each interview was transcribed verbatim following the interview, within a 2-week period. Manually transcribing the data within the two-week period allowed the researcher to review each interview and establish greater connection and immersion in the data. During the transcription process, important ideas, insights, and hunches were written as memos in the margins of the transcripts. These memos later provided bridges and connections to ideas shared by other participants. As mentioned previously, transcribing the data manually and within a two-week period allowed the researcher to listen carefully to what aspects of integration participants were focusing upon and any additional questions that emerged from the interview and that the researcher felt should be added to the interview guide. This process is known as theoretical sampling.

3.5.4 Third-level analysis: grounded theory analysis

In grounded theory, there are two major levels of coding: substantive (open) coding and theoretical coding (Andrews, dos Santos Mariano, dos Santos, Koerber-Timmons, & da Silva, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Substantive coding involves open coding and selective coding procedures (Andrews et al., 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The current research analysis started off with open coding. This involved going line by line through each transcript and indicating important ideas, concepts, and incidents that were relevant to the research question. These codes represented the emergence of certain salient ideas in the data. Codes were framed as a few key words and labels that represented important ideas being brought up by participants. As best as possible these codes were the phrases and keywords used by participants in the interviews. To help the researcher determine what needed coding, simple questions helped guide this process,
such as, “What is the participant saying in this particular line?” and “What ideas are being expressed about integration?” Phrases, words, and segments that interested the interviewer were highlighted and brief notes were written in the margins. A large part of what determines success in the open coding process is theoretical sensitivity by the researcher. Noble and Mitchell (2016) describe theoretical sensitivity, “Theoretical sensitivity refers to the insight of the researcher. It concerns the researcher being able to give meaning to data, understand what the data says, and being able to separate out what is relevant and what is not” (p. 2). In order to increase theoretical sensitivity, memos were kept to document the insights and meaning that were emerging during the coding process. Personal and professional experience in the field of research, psychotherapy, and yoga, allowed the researcher to have sensitivity and to understand what the data was saying.

As codes continued to emerge from the transcripts, a constant comparison method was applied where the codes were compared and contrasted to each other. Connections between codes were made, which lead to categories being identified. In constant comparison, the purpose is to “see if the data supports and continues to support emerging categories” (Holton, 2010, para. 18). In this study, the codes were categorized under different themes. As categories developed, this led to the second step of substantive coding, which is selective coding. The selective coding process has been described as,

Identifying and choosing the core category, systematically connecting it to other categories, validating those similarities and relationships and then completing categories that need further refinement and development (Kolb, 2012, p. 84).

In this process of data analysis, the researcher applied the constant comparison method and went through the previous transcripts to identify any important concepts and ideas that could be coded and put into the identified categories. The categories were then constantly compared
until core categories were identified. These core categories were compared to existing sub-
categories. The sub-categories were linked to the most related and fitting core category. When no
new data or categories emerged from the data, the theoretical saturation point was reached.

The next data analysis process of grounded theory followed, called theoretical coding. In
theoretical coding a constant comparison method was applied to the categories and themes, which
allowed for the researcher to explore and begin developing an understanding of the conceptual
relationship between these themes and categories. According to Holton (2010), in this phase,
“theoretical codes conceptualize how the substantive codes may relate to each other as
hypotheses to be integrated into the theory” (para. 54). The researcher used memos to write down
ideas about how these categories and themes were related, different or similar. She also took note
of participants’ experiences. Theoretical coding led to the emergence of major themes and
underlying patterns of participants’ processes of integrating yoga into counselling and
psychotherapy. Essentially a theory emerged from the categories and subthemes, which was
grounded in the data. Dey (1999) explains that, “when generation of theory is the aim, however,
one is constantly alert to emergent perspectives, what will change and help develop the theory”
(p. 117). Indeed, to help move these identified patterns and themes into theory and a conceptual
framework, additional strategies were used to assist in the process of theory construction: such as
referring to existing research literature and consulting with other professionals in the field. These
strategies helped the researcher to keep an open mind and view the research from multiple
perspectives so as to reduce biases or the narrowing of perceptions.

In summary, from applying grounded theory methods, the researcher came to the
development of a conceptual framework and theory on the processes of integrating yoga into
counselling and psychotherapy. The essence of the grounded theory approach is summarized by
Willig (2013) as the following:
Grounded theory involves the progressive identification and integration of categories of meaning from data. It is both the process of category identification and integration (as method) and its product (as theory) (p. 213).

3.6. Role of the Researcher: Personal Statement

I am a 33-year-old female who is currently pursuing her doctoral degree in counselling psychology. I am also a registered psychotherapist and have been practicing psychotherapy in private practice since 2016. I come from a South Asian background, and both my parents were born in India. They were immersed in the different practices of yoga, such as meditation, scriptural studies of yoga, and yoga practices. My maternal grandfather came from a lineage of priests and regularly practiced yoga. Growing up my parents had exposed me to certain elements of yoga, such as meditation and yoga philosophy. When I entered university, I also began to study yoga in more depth, which included yoga practices, meditation, and yoga philosophy. I obtained my yoga teachers training certificate and after my teacher training I taught yoga and meditation classes in the Greater Toronto Area.

From my personal practice with yoga, I experienced the significant therapeutic benefits of yoga, such as improving my overall mental health and well-being. My regular yoga practice allowed me to cope with many challenging emotions and life stressors. In my psychotherapy practice, I have had many clients share about how their yoga practices have helped them to reduce their own anxieties, depression, and mental health challenges. I found that a common theme among several clients sharing was that practicing yoga led them to a greater place of calm, grounding, and clarity. My observations of my client’s interests in exploring holistic-based practices to manage their mental health, as well as my passion for yoga, sparked my curiosity to understand how I could bring yoga into my psychotherapy work. This interest led me to pursue
my doctoral thesis in exploring the integration of yoga into counselling and psychotherapy practice.

3.7 Reducing Researcher Bias

In qualitative research there is potential for researchers to bring biases, both during the research interview process and in the data analysis process. For example, the personal interests, prior assumptions, and personal beliefs can incline researchers to steer the interviews and participant responses towards a preferred direction, as well as influence how the research data is analyzed. Sikolia, Biros, Mason, & Weiser (2013) ask the question,

Grounded theory methodology and other qualitative research have been discounted by some Information Systems (IS) scholars as nothing other than ‘nice stories. How can readers tell if the emerging theory is not a result of an authors’ ‘self-delusion’, and therefore unreliable and invalid? (p. 1).

In qualitative research studies there are certain evaluation criteria that the researcher needs to maintain in order to consider his or her research results as trustworthy. Trustworthiness has been defined as “the conceptual soundness from which the value of qualitative research may be evaluated” (Sikolia et al., 2013, p. 1). There are four main criteria in qualitative methods that help the research gain credibility and trustworthiness. These are credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Credibility means the “believability or the truth in research findings” (Mandal, 2018, p. 592). Transferability refers to “whether the results obtained from the analysis can be applied to other settings and contexts” (Mandal, 2018, p. 592). Dependability has to do with consistency and reliability of research findings (Mandal, 2018). Lastly, conformability refers to the degree to which the research findings were based upon the actual focus of the inquiry and not the researcher biases and interests (Mandal, 2018).
The current research investigator applied certain strategies throughout the research process to ensure that biases were kept to a minimum and that the research processes were in accordance with the evaluation criteria so the data can be deemed trustworthy and credible. These research strategies to minimize research biases are summarized below.

### 3.7.1 Keeping notes throughout the research process

As mentioned earlier, throughout the interview processes the researcher kept a journal and would jot down personal reflections on the interviews, such as impressions during the initial contact with the participant and personal thoughts and feelings about the interviews. These reflections allowed the researcher to process the interviews and identify possible areas of bias and interferences with the data, thereby improving objectivity. The researcher re-read the transcripts and also referred to personal notes to verify if any personal biases or theories were being brought into the interviews and the data analysis. The researcher applied reflexivity, which involves being self-reflective and self-aware, maintaining introspection throughout the research process, and being conscious about how her personal values, background, and assumptions could affect the results of the research (Sikolia et al., 2013).

### 3.7.2 Theoretical sampling

Theoretical sampling is a strategy that allows for the organic development and refinement of the research processes. More specifically, it allows for the emergence of salient research directions and provides focus on ideas and topics relevant to the study and its core categories. This process helps to reduce researcher biases and interferences with research results because the data that is generated from the study is “grounded” and rooted in participants’ interviews (Breckenridge & Jones, 2009). Breckenridge and Jones (2009) write that “theoretical sampling is a central tenet of classic grounded theory and is essential to the development and refinement of a
theory that is ‘grounded’ in data” (p.1). Theoretical sampling allows the researcher to stay as close to the data as possible and thereby increase credibility and reduce personal biases.

In this current research study the researcher applied theoretical sampling. The interviews with participants began with a few broad questions regarding their integration processes. As the researcher reached the fourth interview, the researcher closely examined the data of all four participants and noticed which areas the participants were focusing on in terms of their processes of integration and the questions and responses that seemed to arise naturally in the interviews. This new information allowed the researcher to then adjust the interview guide where needed, thus providing a greater focus on those specific areas deemed most appropriate to the study.

3.7.3 Consulting with committee members, colleagues and research literature

The researcher connected with various sources to help analyse the data and thereby reduce bias in the research. These sources served as multiple analysts and included the following: researcher’s supervisor, other members of the research committee, a professional colleague, and consulting the research literature. Once codes were developed, the researcher booked several consultations with the main supervisor of the committee in order to gain multiple perspectives and further reduce personal bias. Upon the development of larger themes and categories, the research data were checked again by the supervisor to increase the credibility of the research. The final analysis of the research was then reviewed by the team of committee members, who offered further feedback on the data. During the process of data analysis and generating theory, the researcher also consulted a colleague who is trained in psychotherapy and is experienced in researcher methods. All members who were consulted throughout this research process had extensive knowledge and experience in psychology, psychotherapy, and research. While the researcher developed themes and found relationships between categories that emerged from the data, the researcher also compared findings between existing literature and the current research
data. Consultation from multiple sources allowed the researcher to develop greater openness and flexibility toward the research analysis process, thereby reducing bias and improving the credibility and trustworthiness of the research results.

3.7.4 Leaving an audit trail: Documenting the research process

An audit trail is defined as “creating detailed documentations of each aspect of the research process” to help readers understand how the research has reached its conclusions (Hadi & Closs, 2016, p. 642). The current researcher described in as much detail as possible the processes that were undertaken to reach the conclusions of this study so that any external researcher may replicate the results based upon following this audit trail. The audit trail enhances credibility and trustworthiness by providing conformability (Hadi & Closs, 2016). Conformability is reached when the “researchers must demonstrate that the results are clearly linked to the conclusions in a way that can be followed and, as a process, replicated” (Moon et al., 2016, para. 13).

3.7.5 Transferability of the research

Next, the researcher also tried to provide transferability in the research process to improve data credibility and trustworthiness. Transferability refers to “whether the results obtained from the analysis can be applied to other settings and contexts” (Mandal, 2018, p. 592). Transferability was achieved by providing as much detail as possible regarding the settings and context in which the research was conducted. According to Mandal (2018), this information can provide the reader with “enough information to judge the applicability of the findings to other settings” (p. 592).

3.7.6 Dependability of the research

Dependability has to do with consistency and reliability of the research findings. It is the degree to which the research procedures and methods are documented. The researcher should provide a detailed coverage of methodology, having proper documents of data and methods to
ensure the research findings are dependable and can be replicated by an external source (Mandal, 2018). In the current study, the research investigator has documented in detail the methods and data collection processes in order to support the dependability of the research.

In summary, the researcher kept in mind and carried out the four major evaluation criteria for qualitative methods throughout the study: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Multiple strategies were employed throughout the study to improve trustworthiness and credibility for the findings of this study and to reduce researcher biases.
CHAPTER 4

Results

Rational for presentation of research findings: The presentation of the research findings followed the grounded theory methods. In grounded theory the researcher maintains closeness to the original data by presenting direct quotes from the data which illuminate major themes and categories (Bernard, 2012). ‘Closeness’ to the data is achieved when the researcher provides summaries of each quote without biases and personal analysis, but simply describes participants words (Bernard, 2012; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In grounded theory methods the results are often presented in a manner where several quotes are provided sequentially, which describe major themes or categories, and for each quote the researcher provides an introduction and a summary of that quote (Ashford University Writing Centre, 2019; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). For that reason, the current researcher has followed the guidelines of grounded theory methods in reporting her research finding.

Research results: From participant interviews, four core themes were identified in the process of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. Several underlying themes and categories emerged within each core theme and are reviewed in this chapter. Each theme is described in its own section via direct quotations from participant interviews.

The first core theme, initial experiences with yoga, is introduced in the section *initial experiences with yoga: context and personal practice*. It describes why participants began their practice of yoga, and what their personal yoga practices and routine consisted of. In the first major theme, *healing with yoga*, participants described that they had initially turned to yoga in order to heal an aspect of their physical, mental, or emotional health. In the second major theme, *experiences with a personal yoga practice*, participants spoke about their personal practice of
yoga, such as the aspects of yoga that they brought into their daily lives, and how it impacted them.

The second core theme that emerged from the research interviews was acquiring formal yoga education and training. In this core theme, participants spoke about the yoga education and training that they had undertaken before they brought yoga into counselling and psychotherapy practice. Yoga education and training deepened their understanding of yoga and prepared them to understand the therapeutic applications of yoga for counselling and psychotherapy. The yoga education and training that participants pursued fell under two categories. The first category was learning about the foundations of yoga. The second category of yoga education and training was learning about yoga for mental health care. In this major theme, participants talked about the education and training that they had pursued in order to learn about the foundations of yoga and the therapeutic applications of yoga for mental health.

The third core theme and section, the practice of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy, focused on how yoga was integrated into counselling and psychotherapy practice. Participants explained that their first step of integration involved determining if their clients were ready and suitable to practice yoga in counselling and psychotherapy. This first step is reviewed under the major theme determining the client’s readiness for integration practice. If participants felt that their clients were suitable and ready to practice yoga in counselling and psychotherapy, they described that the next steps of integration, which involved preparing their clients for yoga practice in a therapy session. This preparation included providing clients with psychoeducation on yoga and mental health, developing the therapeutic relationship, and orienting clients to their body. This major theme is described under preparing clients to practice yoga in therapy sessions. Once participants prepared their clients for practicing yoga in therapy, participants described the next major process of integration, which led to the third major theme, bringing yoga into
counselling and psychotherapy. This third theme outlines the common yoga models, yoga techniques, and yoga philosophies that participants mentioned bringing into counselling and psychotherapy sessions. The last major theme, the impact of yoga on clients in therapy, describes what participants observed were the impacts of practicing yoga for clients in counselling and psychotherapy.

In the fourth and final core theme, the challenges of integration and future directions, participants discussed some of the challenges that they had encountered when integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. This major theme is covered under the challenges of integration. Participants also talked about their views regarding the future directions of yoga in counselling and psychotherapy, under the major theme future directions.
Figure 1. Emerging Themes in the Process of Integrating Yoga into Counselling and Psychotherapy
4.1 Initial Experiences with Yoga: Context and Personal Practice

In the first core theme, participants were asked about their reasons for turning to yoga, specifically what had led them to practice yoga. Many participants discussed that they had turned to yoga when they were looking for personal healing, either to address a physical health issue, to work through mental health challenges, or to cope with work stress and burnout. This conversation led to the major theme, healing with yoga.

Participants also discussed about their daily yoga practice, the experiences and benefits that it provided them, and how yoga had become an integral part of their lives. This major theme is explored under experiences with a personal yoga practice.

4.1.1 Healing with yoga

In this major theme, participants spoke about the major life events that led them to practice yoga. Many participants talked about going through physical health challenges and finding that yoga had greatly improved their health. These conversations with participants led to the subtheme yoga for physical healing. Several participants also shared that they had turned to yoga when they were going through emotional challenges, such as trauma, anxiety, or depression. These participants expressed that yoga had helped them cope with difficult emotions and also heal from traumas and other mental health challenges. This particular theme is discussed under yoga for emotional healing. Some participants talked about going through a period in their lives where they were experiencing high levels of work stress and burnout. Participants mentioned that practicing yoga had helped them to release work stress, reduced burnout, and also provided them with personal self-care. This theme is reviewed under yoga for work stress, and burnout.

Yoga for physical healing. In this subtheme, participants talked about how they had turned to yoga to cope with physical pain and heal a physical injury or disability. Several
participants mentioned that yoga had been very helpful in reducing physical pain, correcting physical injury, and in some cases even healing physical health issues altogether.

Chandra explained how yoga had helped her heal the part of her body that had been in paralysis due to errors committed during a surgery. She stated,

I was born with a disability which is I had my caroche which mean one small ear, one of your ears doesn’t work… I had an operation… it didn’t work and in the process of that they cut the facial nerve…The left side of the face is paralyzed …I really didn’t use or feel the left side of my body very much because it had all gotten dissociated from the trauma. So when I began yoga and reflexology suddenly my left side of my body started waking up. And this was amazing to me that by doing yoga and rubbing on my feet I could feel things in the left side of my body that I never felt before.

Chandra explained that for several years she lived with paralysis due to an error during surgical procedures. When Chandra began her practice of yoga, she found that yoga had revived the parts of her body that had become numb and paralyzed. Yoga had brought awareness to Chandra’s left side of the body, “it woke up the left side of my body,” as she expressed.

Similar to Chandra, Lilith also emphasized how yoga had led to her physical healing. Lilith described that by practicing yoga, she was able to avoid major foot surgery. Lilith said,

I got into yoga because they wanted to do quite a dramatic surgery at a young age for me. So I could never do any sports or these kinds of things because I was walking so much inward. Then I decided to start yoga and found it incredibly powerful, where after four years they couldn’t see it on x-ray. I could walk and do all kinds of things.

Lilith talked about a foot disability that left her unable to engage in physical activities. She explained that by practicing yoga she had improved her foot condition to the extent that she
no longer needed surgery. From practicing yoga, Lilith was able to engage in physical activities again.

Another participant, Desiree, expressed that she was in a lot of physical pain due to her degenerative spine disorder. Desiree found that yoga helped her in managing her pain as well as reducing inflammation. She said,

I live with, um, degenerative spine in my lower back… I was having tremendous pain and on an anti-inflammatory at least once a year… So I started to practice hot yoga a couple of times a week… I didn’t know where it was going to go, just that it was going to be good for me… I knew that this just works, this works in terms of pain management. I have not been on anti-inflammatory for 10 years now… By the way 10 years later I am still going.

Desiree stated that since she started practicing yoga regularly, she found that the inflammation caused by the degenerative spine disorder decreased significantly, so much so that she had not needed anti-inflammatory medications for over 10 years. In the interview, Desiree said that she continued to practice yoga at least three times a week because of the tremendous benefits that she experienced from the practice, both physically and mentally.

Similarly, Anna described how yoga had helped her deal with physical pain in her body. Anna spoke about the several surgeries she had gone through for her spine, which left her in major physical discomfort. It was through yoga that she was able to find relief and greater physical comfort. Anna said,

Well um, you know again we are talking about pain and suffering and at that time I had a lot of issues with my back. I had scoliosis; I had a lot of back surgery. I have had bone fusion, a Harrington rod, I have had the Harrington rod removed…. You know I went to some yoga classes and I found it helpful. So that was what I was looking for initially, trying to get more comfortable physically in my body.
Anna discussed the many surgical procedures she had to go through due to her scoliosis, some of which were not successful. She explained that when she began yoga, she found that it helped her experience greater comfort in her body and some pain relief after her surgeries.

In this subtheme, *healing with yoga*, several participants shared that they had initially turned to yoga to deal with a physical health challenge. For example, Chandra mentioned a medical treatment that was ineffective and left her with paralysis, and Anna expressed going through the medical processes that had led to great physical discomfort. Participants stated that when they began to practice yoga, they experienced several benefits such as the ease of physical pain, reducing the unpleasant side effects of medical procedures, and for some participants, experiencing a physical healing.

*Yoga for emotional healing.* In this subtheme, participants talked about turning to yoga when they had emotional challenges, such depression, anxiety, or trauma. Participants spoke about how yoga had been an effective practice that helped them cope and heal their emotional challenges.

Ananda described undergoing physical abuse at a young age and, as a result of her trauma, suffering mentally throughout her teenage years and early adult life. She described how yoga had transformed her relationship with her body and helped her heal her trauma. Ananda relayed,

> I had been an altar server at a Catholic church for many years, for 10 years. I helped the priest, every Sunday… I came from a physical abuse, it was my trauma, and as a teenager I suffered quite a bit… I remember being 18 years old feeling godless, and I stumbled upon the Sivananda Centre… We did our first Surya namaskar, and he said, “This is your physical prayer to God.” And it made me cry, I just fell to my knees… That initial experience that my body is divine, and I can use it to connect to God, without a priest in between.
Ananda talked about being an altar server in the Catholic church and experiencing physical abuse. She talked about going through her teenager years feeling depressed and having a negative relationship with her body. Ananda spoke about her first encounter with yoga where she was told that her body was sacred and part of the divine. From yoga, Ananda learned that she could use her body for her “prayers to God,” and that a priest was not needed in between. In conversations with Ananda, she explained that this understanding and practice of yoga resulted in healing the relationship that she had with her body and ultimately healing her trauma and depression.

Participant Meera explained that she had turned to yoga to heal emotional pain, specifically the emotional suffering she experienced from her parents’ divorce. Meera stated, “After my parents’ divorce, suffering, I literally was choking and coughing and couldn’t speak,..You know, my parents took me to the yoga center when I was really suffering after my parents got separated and divorced. I was like when I found yoga I was like “wow I am going to make it, I am going to be ok,” because I learned how to be with the breathing and the body and the pain in my body’… yoga was very helpful to lean on in order to heal… Just continue to feel strong and open like through the asanas.

Meera talked about how she had suffered emotionally when her parents were going through their divorce. For Meera, yoga provided her with support and helped her to learn how to be with the emotional pain that was present in her body. The yoga practices also guided her in using her breath to cope with her emotions. The physical postural practice of yoga provided Meera with feelings of strength and openness.

Several other participants also expressed that yoga had helped them in healing their emotions and mental health. For example, Chandra said, “The yoga helped…It began to open me up emotionally, so I began to deal with my trauma.” Chandra relayed how yoga had helped her to address her personal traumas. Similarly, Anna expressed that yoga helped her to deal with her
physical and emotional pain. She shared, “Well, it wasn’t just physical pain yes, it sure did help me with the emotional pain.”

In this major theme, several participants discussed that practicing yoga was beneficial for their mental health and emotional healing. They talked about going through emotionally difficult experiences. For example, Ananda discussed her experiences with physical abuse and trauma at a young age and using yoga to establish a positive relationship with her body and heal her trauma. Meera spoke about the divorce of her parents causing her emotional suffering and how practicing yoga helped her to cope and use her body and breath to work through her pain. Many participants explained that they had turned to yoga because they found its practices to be helpful in healing their emotions and traumas. They also reported that yoga provided them with coping skills to deal with difficult emotions.

**Yoga for work stress and burnout.** Several participants of the study spoke about turning to yoga in order to manage work stress and burnout. These conversations led to the subtheme, *yoga for work stress and burnout*. Participants expressed that yoga had provided them with the self-care and support needed to cope with stress, vicarious trauma and burnout.

Joseph talked about the high levels of stress that he would experience as an emergency physician, before he became a psychotherapist. Joseph said that the yoga practices helped him to manage his work stress. He stated,

So I worked in my original career as an ER physician, and it was high-stress environment that I got high stress every year. And I was looking for ways to manage stress…So during a period of time off when my work was getting more and more stressful, and my life was getting more and more stressful, I just found myself going into more and more yoga classes. Some of it was kind of mindfulness. Like I would go, something deep inside told me to go.
Joseph spoke about looking for ways to manage his work stress as an ER physician and feeling drawn to yoga. For Joseph, going to yoga classes regularly helped him manage and cope with his work and life stress. In conversations with Joseph, he explained the mental health benefits of yoga on his stress levels.

Melanie described working with highly distressed clinical populations and how she used yoga to cope with work stress, burnout, and vicarious trauma. She shared,

Especially when I worked with women who experience so much trauma and violence, I could feel the effects on my body of taking in those stories, and I was experiencing vicarious trauma…So, I was really noticing that, um, returning to yoga weekly um, and feeling some benefit from that. I think it does a bunch of things, it certainly helps to settle stress and anxiety. So I, um, could feel more calmness and relaxation, you know, doing savasana for example, doing other yoga forms.

Melanie had taken on these stories and traumas of her clients as vicarious trauma. Melanie expressed that she began to practice yoga as a way to take care of herself and experience relief from work stress and vicarious trauma. She mentioned that doing her yoga practices provided her with many benefits such as greater relaxation and calmness, and reduction in stress and anxiety.

Melanie provided details on how her meditation practices allowed her to deepen her awareness of the stress and emotions she was carrying within herself. She expressed,

When I sat quietly, I mean this is not a clinical way of saying it, “The shit comes to the surface,” and that was positive in terms of really acknowledging it. I could acknowledge the level and degree of stress and grief that I had been experiencing.

Melanie relayed that when she sat still in her meditation practice, many of the emotions that she had been carrying inside of herself had surfaced, such as grief and stress. Melanie was
able to acknowledge these emotions that she was storing within herself and thereby address her stress and grief from the vicarious trauma.

Tejal, a medical doctor and a psychotherapist, discussed how she used yoga to relieve work stress. She reflected, “Yeah, and then in medical school it became a mind-body thing as well…As a resident it was just as how I would relieve stress. I would listen to a tape or go to yoga classes.” For Tejal, yoga was a mind-body practice that she turned to in order to release the stress that she was experiencing during her residency in medical school. Tejal would attend yoga classes or follow yoga tapes.

In this subtheme, *yoga for work stress and burnout*, participants expressed that yoga had helped release work stress, burnout, or vicarious trauma. For example, Joseph mentioned that his high stress job of an emergency physician led him to seek out yoga classes, which helped him to cope with work stress. Melanie’s encounters with clients experiencing violence and trauma resulted in vicarious trauma and she used yoga as way to release the stress, grief, and anxiety that she was storing in her body and therefore experience greater calm and relaxation. Overall, some participants of this study expressed the role of yoga in helping them deal with the emotional consequences of challenging and stressful work situations. Yoga provided them with the relief, self-care, and the time out needed to acknowledge and address their work-related stress.

4.1.2 Experiences with a personal yoga practice

Participants continued their conversations regarding the role of yoga in their lives. In this major theme, participants talked about having a daily yoga routine that involved meditation, pranayama and yoga asana. Almost all participants mentioned that they would practice yoga in the morning, and that their yoga practice would set a positive tone for the rest of their day. Participants noticed that practicing yoga regularly helped them to connect to their body and
themselves, deepen their presence and compassion, and develop a mental, emotional, and spiritual balance.

Participant Anna mentioned that her daily yoga routine started in the morning with meditation and yoga asana. She spoke about the benefits that she experienced from her yoga practice. She relayed,

I do some asana most mornings, then I usually sit for a while after that... And some days the focus is more on meditation, and I might just, you know, do some half cobra... I would say the biggest thing yoga taught me is this whole notion of presence and what it means to be present. Um, you know, it has been very, I would, say central to my life, to my own journey... I check in with my energy and where something feels stuck or wants to move, I guess yoga as you know teaches us to do that... I have learned to understand what it is to be guided from a deeper place.

Anna said that she practiced a combination of meditation and yoga postural practices in the morning. Anna also explained that yoga has helped her to develop positive qualities such as being more present, recognizing and addressing blocked energies in her body, and learning how to be guided in life from a deep place within herself. For Anna, yoga has played a central role in her life.

Similar to Anna, Meera spoke about having a dedicated morning yoga practice. She mentioned how her yoga practice has begun to affect her personally and create positive changes for herself and her therapy practice. Meera reflected,

I have a daily practice right... Even five, fifteen or twenty minutes a day of yoga and meditation, it's like my date or something. It's the way I connect with myself and my body... Because I have many years of practice, especially Kripalu yoga... I am able to help clients do that, I am able to have empathy, literally feel the emotions and sit with the
emotions, and stay with the physical sensations they are describing… I am not afraid of silence, I am not afraid of pausing, I am able to be present.

Meera spoke about having a daily yoga practice that included meditation, breathing, and yoga postural practice. Her yoga practice was the way that she connected to herself and her body. Meera mentioned that from years of practicing yoga she had developed greater presence, empathy and physical attunement with her clients. Meera explained that the sensitivity that she has developed from her yoga practice has allowed her to feel the emotions and physical sensations of her clients, and also hold space for silence and pauses in her therapy sessions with clients.

Melanie also mentioned having a daily yoga routine, which she often did in the morning. She described how yoga brought her mental, emotional, and spiritual balance, and other benefits as well. Melanie explained,

Well I have had, like, a daily practice now for years. I will do some sitting…usually silent sitting meditation. Then I will do, um, an asana practice of some kind…Or maybe I would do a kind of pranayama… I would say yoga is my medicine…I mean I see it that we are working with physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual balance as well through yoga… I think with various forms of meditation, for me there is a piece of compassion for oneself built in it, and also self-awareness, which I think helps me in my life and work outside.

Melanie said that yoga is a regular part of her daily life, and that she incorporates meditation, yogic breathing, and physical postures practice as a part of her yoga routine. She described that her yoga practice helped her develop more balance mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. She also experienced greater compassion and self-awareness as a result of regular meditation practices.
Similarly, Ananda talked about having a daily yoga practice, which includes meditation, pranayama and yoga asana. She said that her yoga routine helped her to address her lower back pain issues and also develop the clarity to understand the nature of her true self. She said,

I have a lot of lower back issues, so I have to do a lot of things that push my disk back in…My practice is all breathing 25 min of pranayama and 40-50 min of meditation. Often it’s just body scanning, like Vipasanna practice of moving through the body, and then just letting go of all of it and just staying in silence. That’s my work, the more I do that the clearer I get for who is in front of me…So yoga says you are your own purusha, your truth is inside of you. you just have to clear the system to see it clearly. And these are the tools we use to see clearly.

For Ananda, her yoga practices provide her with the strength and support needed to address her lower back pain. Ananda’s daily practice of asana, pranayama, and meditation also allows her to clear her physical, energetic, and mental system, and thus develop the clarity to see her true self, which she referred to as the purusha (meaning the divine self). Ananda explained that yoga provides the tools to see, with clarity, what is in front of her, and this positively impacts the ways that she is able to understand and work with her clients’ issues.

In this subtheme, experiences with a personal yoga practice, participants talked about having a daily yoga practice that consisted of meditation, yoga asana, and pranayama. For example, Anna expressed looking forward to her morning meditations and yoga practices. Meera talked about her yoga routine as her “date,” which helps her to connect with herself and her body. Ananda expressed that she uses yoga to help support her lower back issues, as well as to practice stillness and “being clear” for her clients. All these participants highlighted the importance of a daily yoga practice and the benefits that had come from their long-term yoga practice. Participants mentioned feeling more connected to themselves, feeling more present and
compassionate and having a greater sense of mental, emotional, and spiritual balance. Participants also stated that practicing yoga had positively impacted the way that they were able to work with clients in therapy practice. Yoga had led participants to cultivate greater empathy for, presence with, and attunement to clients.

In this core theme, initial experiences with yoga, participants talked about turning to yoga when they were seeking personal healing, such as for physical pain or disability, mental health and emotional challenges, or work-related stress and burnout. In the major theme healing with yoga, almost all participants stated that yoga benefitted them in some way, such as either finding relief from physical pain and injury, correcting physical health challenges, reducing anxiety and depression, learning how to cope with difficult emotions, or reducing work stress and symptoms of burnout.

Several participants continued to talk about how yoga had become a part of their daily lives, in the major theme experiences with a personal yoga practice. Almost all participants described having a daily yoga routine, which often took place in the morning, and involved postural practice, breathing practices, and meditation. Participants described the importance of having a daily yoga practice and how it provided them with several benefits, such as greater presence and compassion, and mental, emotional, and spiritual balance. These participants mentioned that the benefits yoga gave them also transferred to helping them better serve their clients in therapy sessions.

4.2 Acquiring Formal Yoga Education and Training

After participants spoke about healing with yoga, they discussed how their journey with yoga continued in formal study and yoga education. This second core theme describes the yoga-related education and training that participants had obtained to deepen their personal study and
practice of yoga and learn about the therapeutic applications of yoga for mental health. The formal education and training that participants pursued fell under two categories. The first was, *learning about the foundations of yoga*, which involved learning about the basics of yoga, like yoga philosophy, history, and its practices, and took the form of a certified yoga teachers’ program and other related yoga training and educational experiences. The second category of yoga education and training was *learning about yoga for mental health care*. In this major theme, participants talked about the education and training that they acquired to learn about the therapeutic applications of yoga for mental health. Under this major theme, participants also discussed their reasons for pursuing training and education in yoga for mental health, specifically so that they could bring yoga into their therapy practice and address the limitations of Western counselling and psychotherapy.

**4.2.1 Learning about the foundations of yoga**

The first major theme, *learning about the foundations of yoga*, described the specific yoga-related education and training that provided participants with a greater in-depth study of the foundations of yoga and its practices, such as yoga history, yoga philosophy, yoga techniques, and how to teach yoga to others. Learning about the foundations of yoga often took the form of pursuing a yoga teacher training program, which is reviewed under the subtheme *certified yoga teacher training*, or attending yoga courses and workshops, studying yoga with a mentor, or studying yoga scriptures, which is reviewed under the subtheme *additional education and training on the foundations of yoga*.

**Certified yoga teacher training.** Many participants shared that earlier in their lives when their interest in yoga had peaked, they had immersed themselves in a more serious study of yoga. For many participants, this was through a yoga teacher training program. This subtheme relays the experiences that participants had in their training to become a certified yoga teacher. Some of
these experiences included learning about yoga practices, theory, history, and how to conduct a yoga class, shadowing a yoga teacher, and teaching yoga in their communities. Not all participants who took the yoga teacher training program taught yoga, but rather taking this certification was a part of their personal study of yoga.

Participant Anna spoke about her yearlong yoga teacher training program and described her experiences at the training. She said,

Well yoga in a sense was kind of where I started. Um, I did a yoga teacher training program, it was a yearlong teacher training program…It was kind of the yoga teacher training camp like the boot camp…Basically at the time it was Hatha yoga, it was at the yoga center Toronto. After I graduated it was starting to, it was morphing into Iyanger yoga. So Iyanger yoga, you know, was part of our training. Um, meditation and philosophy was part of our training, and the rest of it was just, you know, Hatha.

Anna described that her training consisted of learning yoga postures, meditation, and yoga philosophy. She shared that she had trained in the traditional yoga form called Hatha Yoga and later on began to adapt her practice to a more recent style of yoga called Iyengar Yoga.

Similarly, Lilith talked about taking a yoga teacher training program. She mentioned training at the highest level, which involves completing the greatest number of hours. Lilith relayed,

So, I am trained within the Iyengar system of yoga training, and I started that also 25 years ago. I started my yoga training at the age of 20 at Copenhagen at the Iyengar Institute of Copenhagen. And I got very close to my teacher and I apprenticed every day for about seven to eight years. I am certified Iyengar yoga teacher and also trained at the highest level of yoga alliance.
Lilith spoke about training in the Iyengar system for her yoga teacher program, her experience of doing a yoga apprenticeship, and shadowing her teacher. During our conversations, Lilith also mentioned that she had provided yoga classes for her community for many years before she began her psychotherapy practice. She eventually taught yoga alongside her psychotherapy practice. Lilith stated,

I have seen clients here for the last eight years, so before that I mainly taught yoga...So I work at this office, this is where I see my clients and where I teach yoga. I teach yoga in the other room.

Like Lilith, Melanie reflected upon the teacher training program that she had completed and her experience in teaching yoga in her community. She shared, “I did some [yoga] as a teenager, and then took a yearlong training probably when I was in university.” Melanie’s yoga practice began as a teenager, and later in her university years she pursued formal training in a certified yoga teacher training program. Melanie continued to share more about her yoga training and what she had learned. Melanie expressed,

Oh my gosh, like the history and roots of yoga, the values like the yamas and the niyamas, the philosophy, also more technical kinds of things around the teaching the Hatha yoga class... She mentored us and observed us in teaching… Then I taught in the community for maybe three or four years.

Melanie explained that her yoga teacher training included many aspects of yoga such as yoga history, the philosophy of the yamas and niyamas (yogic principles of living), and the technical aspects of teaching Hatha Yoga. Melanie also said that she taught yoga classes for several years in her community.

Participant Meera had also completed a teacher training program. Meera reflected upon the different yoga training programs that she pursued throughout her life. She said,
Like I did a lot of residential learning right. Like I lived at Kripalu for 4 months and then I studied there for a month of yoga teacher, then Phoenix Rising was you know probably a total of eight months. And then I did multiple 10 day meditation retreats, where you also get like lectured. But then I also studied Ayurveda for a year which is also about philosophy. So I had a lot of hands on like residential learning about yoga teacher, philosophy.

Meera talked about living at a yoga training institute for four months and doing a yoga teacher training program, where she became a yoga teacher. She described her yoga training experiences as vast, and she supported her education with yoga by taking other training programs such as meditation intensives, Ayurveda—a sister branch of yoga—and the Phoenix Rising yoga program, which teaches a therapeutic form of yoga.

In this subtheme, certified yoga teacher training, participants talked about becoming certified yoga teachers through a yoga teacher training program. Some participants said their training programs lasting a few months and others said their training program lasted for a year or more. Some participants taught yoga in their community, whereas others did not. The more popular styles of yoga that participant trained in were Hatha Yoga and Iyengar Yoga. Participants mentioned their yoga teacher training program was comprehensive and covered various aspects of yoga, such as yoga practices and techniques, yoga history, and yoga philosophy.

*Additional education and training on the foundations of yoga.* Yoga teacher training was only one aspect of participants’ training and education in yoga. Several participants stated that their journey in yoga included diverse educational experiences, which often took the form of workshops, classes, studying with mentors, and self-study of yogic scriptures. Participants who had completed their yoga teacher training had also continued to pursue various yoga training and educational experiences. This conversation led to the subtheme *additional education and training*
on the foundations of yoga. Participants talked about their interests in deepening their learning and mastery of the various aspects of yoga.

For example, Lilith mentioned engaging in the self-study of yoga and taking classes to study yoga philosophy and yogic scriptures in depth. She expressed,

About eight years ago, I was particularly interested in studying, um, the yoga sutras of Patanjali because it’s the study of the mind and consciousness. I studied extensively the yogic scriptures and particularly the yoga sutras Bhagavata Gita, Upanishads, Mantra Shastra, and Sanskrit. Um, and then I got very curious about integrating the two, so I decided that I needed to write a book about Patanjali’s yoga sutras, but particularly the first book and that’s what I chose to write my PhD thesis on.

Lilith mentioned that her major interest and study had been in learning about the yogic perspectives of mind and consciousness and studying ancient yogic scriptures. Her in-depth and long-term study of yoga also led her to writing a book that provided commentary on the ancient yogic scripture, the Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras, and completing her PhD thesis in this subject.

Tejal’s continuing education on yoga took the form of taking a course on Hinduism and learning about yoga philosophy and yogic scripture. She relayed,

In undergrad I took a course in Hinduism, it was not so much the religion but looked at Vedanta and the Vedic philosophy. So there was lots of yoga, yoga sutra, understanding the panchamaya model, so a whole bunch of things from that that I think influenced me as I was going through um, medicine, subconsciously through me, this made me realize that I had a different structure of what the body is in my mind.

From taking these classes and learning about the yogic perspective of a person, such as learning the panchamaya kosha model (a yogic model describing the multidimensional spheres of
a person) Tejal shared that her perceptions of the body and mind had changed. She expressed that her learning influenced the way she approached the body and mind in her career as a medical doctor.

Joseph talked about his additional yoga education involving reading books on yoga and attending yoga programs by influential teachers in the yoga. He said,

So, I read a book around the time of separating, going through a lot of awfulness, named *Yoga and the Quest for Self* by Stephen Cope. So the first time I went to Kripalu… I did the program with him... And then I went back and actually next year did a program with Marian Woodman and Stephan Cope. Yeah, so a lot actually came up, ‘cause I was going to Kripalu every year. I also, I did a program in Toronto… I actually like the personal growth part a little more than the traditional *asana* practice.

Joseph spoke about reading yoga books, studying with various mentors, and taking yoga workshops, training, and classes. Joseph regularly took time out from his career as an emergency physician to attend these education programs. Joseph expressed that he was drawn to these workshops and trainings because they offered him more than what traditional yoga classes offered, specifically the personal growth part. Joseph mentioned that attending yoga-related education has become a regular part of his life.

In this subtheme, participants talked about the yoga education that they had undertaken in addition to their yoga teacher training program. Participants spoke about taking classes, workshops, attending conferences, and engaging in the personal study of yoga. They spoke about exploring yoga philosophy, yogic scriptures, and yogic models of healing. This additional yoga education assisted participants in further developing their area of interest in the yogic fields and deepen their understanding and experiences of the various aspects of yoga.
4.2.2 Learning about yoga for mental health care

Participants spoke about how their interests in learning about yoga for mental health and its integration into counselling and psychotherapy led them to pursue education and training programs related to the therapeutic applications of yoga. This led the emergence of the major theme, *learning about yoga for mental health care*.

Participants also talked about their reasons for wanting to learn about yoga for mental health care. They mentioned that they encountered several limitations when working with Western counselling and psychotherapy approaches and that they felt yoga was able to address these gaps because it dealt with the mind, body, and spirit. Participants’ conversations about the limitations of counselling and psychotherapy and how yoga addresses these gaps are reviewed under the subtheme *yoga addresses the limitations of Western mental health approaches*.

Participants described the education, training, and experiences that were instrumental to their path of learning about integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. They talked about taking a certified yoga therapy training program, which provided participants with a more formal study of the therapeutic applications of yoga and led to certification as a Yoga Therapist. This is reviewed under the subtheme, *certified yoga therapy training*.

In addition to this training, participants shared that they pursued workshops, classes, conferences, and other related education and training related to yoga for mental health. This is reviewed in the subtheme *additional education and training on yoga for mental health care*.

During our conversations, participants highlighted the importance of their own daily yoga practice in providing them with the insights to better understand how yoga could be integrated into counselling and psychotherapy. They expressed that having a personal yoga practice allowed them to better understand how to bring yoga into their counselling and psychotherapy practice.
These conversations are reviewed under the subtheme *learning integration through a personal yoga practice.*

_Yoga addresses the limitations of Western mental health approaches._ Participants talked about the challenges that they encountered when working with Western counselling and psychotherapy approaches. Many participants spoke about the split between the mind, body, and spirit in Western counselling and psychotherapy and how this was a limitation in addressing the deeper healing that their clients required. Almost all participants found that yoga addressed these limitations because it included aspects of the mind, body, and spirit in healing. This led to the subtheme *yoga addresses the limitations of Western mental health approaches._ Participants described bringing in yoga practices and yogic perspectives to work more holistically in counselling and psychotherapy sessions.

Lilith talked about how Western forms of therapy focused heavily on the intellect and did not provide a strong enough framework to address the body and spirituality in clients. Lilith reflected on how yoga is a much more integrated modality than current Western talk therapies, because it includes the mind, body, and spirit in healing, Lilith expressed,

So I felt that in Western psychotherapy that there could be an aspect of embodiment lacking and then the aspect of being able to, um, work with spiritual experience … Western therapy seems sometimes that it felt like a person could do therapy forever… it felt too intellectual…I find the benefits in Eastern approach believes that healing demands work with the body, mind, and spirit, and breath…That it’s not just about like coping with anxiety or making us functional human beings, but to develop both psychologically and spiritually.

Lilith felt that Western therapies focused on the intellect could lead clients to getting stuck in therapy and progressing slowly. For her, yoga went beyond just “coping with anxiety” or
making a “functional human being,” but addressed the body, the psychology, and the spirituality of the person. She felt that yoga demanded deeper work and could help clients shift out of focusing too much on their intellect. Lilith continued to share that many clients sought her out for therapy because they were interested in addressing their mental health holistically.

Tejal also spoke about the limitations of talk therapy. She felt that her clients could get stuck in therapy when they stayed at the cognitive level in talk therapy. She highlighted how yoga addresses the body and can release deeply stored emotions. Tejal shared,

Some people can get really stuck in talk therapy, and often it just re-lives stuff…

Although it’s more cognitive, it doesn’t address the emotional… A lot of people I have seen have had psychotherapy for years, and they have not found anything that works… what we are doing in yoga, we are actually releasing the emotion from the body, because the emotion gets stored in the body. Um, and it’s really about getting people out of their “pattern” to do something opposite.

Tejal explained that remaining at the cognitive level could often lead to clients getting stuck and reliving deeper physical and emotional patterns. Tejal mentioned how yoga could address these limitations by including the role of the body in mental health and releasing deeper emotions that are stored in the body. She stated that yoga changes the “stuck” pattern in the mind and body therefore helps clients to get out of negative habitual patterns.

Melanie also expressed the limitations of Western forms of therapy as being too focused on the mind and intellect and ignoring the other spheres of the person. She mentioned how yoga could address these limitations because of its holistic approach of including the body. Melanie said,

Again some limitations of Western forms that we talk about the psyche and the mind, and the intellect, and only at that level… People that might have some cognitive differences or
struggles with learning and that kind of thing, may not connect with more intellectual talk therapy only… There is a language and wisdom in the body, I want to connect with that as well as for that person…. I think I appreciate Eastern thoughts and approaches around the holistic, that there isn’t this strict demarcation about body and mind and these separate spheres.

Melanie expressed that some clients may not be cognitively inclined or could have challenges with learning or using an intellectual approach to therapy. Melanie believes that the body has its own wisdom and therefore she would want her clients to also include the body in session. For Melanie, she appreciates the holistic nature of Eastern perspectives, which focus on integrating the mind, body, and spirit.

Chandra also talked about how the Eastern approach to mental health includes the body and spiritual aspects of a person. Chandra reflected on the significance of having clients address their body and their spirituality, especially clients going through cancer recovery. Chandra explained,

Because the Eastern philosophy do include the body in a more active way, um, it also can be useful in helping people open up to their spirituality… I worked with a lot of um, people who are ill with cancer and they often need a spiritual connection in that difficult journey.

Chandra provided the example of working with clients who were going through cancer and had difficult experiences in their journey of recovery. Chandra observed that these clients benefited from addressing their spirituality in psychotherapy. For Chandra, yoga provides the missing pieces to Western counselling and psychotherapy, which are the body and spirituality in mental health care.
In this subtheme, many participants talked about the limitations of Western counselling and psychotherapy. Participants expressed that Western therapies focus narrowly on one aspect of a person—the mind and intellect—which can lead clients to getting stuck in therapy and reliving their stories. Several participants spoke about their appreciation of yoga and Eastern approaches, because they include the role of the body, mind, and spirit in healing. For example, Alisa stated how yoga enables whole-body healing and Melanie expressed that yoga provides balance to the mind, body, and spirit. Participants talked about how many of their clients were looking for holistic mental health approaches and that they were “hungry” for “other ways to connect with themselves and the world,” as Lilith said.

**Certified yoga therapy training.** In this subtheme, many participants spoke about taking a yoga therapy training program, which provided them with certification and the designation of “yoga therapist.” Participants explained that these training programs were intensive and could last for a year or more. Several participants said that this program had prepared them to understand the therapeutic aspects of yoga for mental health.

Tejal reflected on her experience of learning yoga therapy. She spoke about her interest in yoga therapy led her to a yoga therapy training program in India. She said,

My yoga teacher…she was studying yoga therapy. I was like, “What? This is a thing?!?” Like, oh my goodness! So I started to research it and I decided to go to study yoga therapy in India with, um, students of Krishnaamacharya…It was the first time since I was a kid that people were talking about what yoga really is, and that it’s not just movement and breathing and doing the pose, and it really, really grounded me.

Tejal’s introduction to yoga therapy by her yoga teacher led her to pursue a yoga therapy training program in India at a well-known yoga therapy school. Tejal explained that learning about yoga therapy widened her perception of yoga as being more than just movement and
breathing, that yoga can also be used for therapeutic purposes. She relayed that this greater understanding of yoga grounded her in the true practice of yoga.

Desiree also spoke about taking a yoga therapy training program. She talked about what her training involved. She relayed,

So, I took 300 hours of training at Yoga Therapy Toronto. And then I took, um, I did a three-day course with Linda Chapman, learning how to do yoga specifically with your children and teens. So in my yoga I call it “Therapeutic Yoga for Stress Reduction,” my classes.

Desiree mentioned taking a yoga therapy training program in Toronto, which led her to become a yoga therapist. In addition, she took a shorter course on therapeutic yoga for children and teens. She expressed that her yoga therapy training and her training on yoga for children and teens led her to offer therapeutic yoga classes for stress reduction.

Similar to Desiree, Lilith also spoke about doing a yoga therapy training program. Lilith reflected,

And I am in the middle of taking a three-year therapeutic education within Ayunger yoga in working therapeutically with yoga…yoga therapy, and I do that training in LA and it’s the next three years.

Lilith spoke about being enrolled in a yoga therapy program to learn how to use yoga therapeutically with her clients. Lilith also mentioned in her conversation that she hoped to offer her clients the choice of receiving traditional psychotherapy or yoga therapy.

In this subtheme, participants talked about taking a yoga therapy training program to become a certified yoga therapist. The yoga therapy training helped them better understand how to apply yoga for mental health. For example, Desiree talked about taking a yoga therapy course and offering therapeutic yoga classes for stress reduction. Lilith spoke about taking a yoga
therapy program to help her understand how to work “therapeutically with yoga” and offer yoga therapy to her clients.

**Additional education and training on yoga for mental health care.** Some participants had mentioned taking workshops, courses, attending conferences, and other education and training related to the therapeutic applications of yoga for mental health. This subtheme, *additional education and training on yoga for mental health care,* reviews these findings. This yoga education differed from yoga therapy training programs because it did not provide participants with the designation of “yoga therapist.” Instead, the education was often shorter in duration and less intensive than the yoga therapy program. Not all participants pursued the yoga therapist training program, and instead some turned to taking yoga workshops, conferences, and reading books and other educational material related to learning about the use of yoga for mental health care.

Joseph spoke about attending conferences and workshops where he learned about using yoga to treat mental health. He said,

*Kripalu had this great conference, it was called “Conference on Yoga, Spirituality and Psychotherapy.” They brought a lot of speakers…who write about, um, eating disorders and emotional eating, and there were a few other quite famous people there. I was very influenced by the conference… I did a really long workshop with Anna Daya Judith, it was about 10 days, “The Psychology of the Chakras”… I think I took away that a real marriage- that a lot of these systems could really overlap. So that some of the Western psychological systems and the yogic systems could articulate together very well.*

Joseph relayed attending a conference that explored the intersection of yoga, spirituality, and psychotherapy. Joseph expressed being deeply influenced by the conference. He also spoke about attending a workshop and learning about the psychology of the chakras – a yogic theory on
human functioning. According to Joseph, these educational experiences highlighted for him the connection between yoga and psychology. He saw a “marriage between both” and understood that some of the psychological systems and yogic systems could work very well together.

Melanie talked about the yoga training she acquired to treat her clients for mental health problems. Melanie described taking a trauma-sensitive yoga training program. She shared,

So it’s 40 hours of training, um, and it was a combination of um, lectures and information on the impact of trauma on the body and the mind, and how people respond to trauma and what that looks like in people’s bodies. And it was about us, um, doing the yoga together…so they really slowed the yoga down and they really offered choices at all times.

Melanie described that this training program examined treating trauma holistically by addressing the impacts of trauma on the body and mind. She learned how to use yoga to address trauma in her clients and how to modify yoga practices to meet the needs of clients with trauma, for example, by “slowing things down” and offering many choices.

This subtheme describes how participants pursued education related to learning about using yoga therapeutically. This additional education took the form of attending workshops, training programs, and conferences related to yoga for mental health. For example, Joseph mentioned attending a conference that explored combining yoga and spirituality into psychotherapy. Melanie spoke about taking a trauma-sensitive yoga training program to teach her about the use yoga for clients experiencing trauma. These educational experiences helped participants understand how yoga could address mental health issues and combine with counselling and psychotherapy.

**Learning about integration through a personal yoga practice.** In this subtheme, many participants spoke about how their own personal practice of yoga had helped in understanding
how to integrate yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. A common reflection among participants was that the more they practiced yoga for themselves, the better they were able to understand how the tools of yoga would affect their clients in therapy.

Participant Ananda reflected upon this point and shared her views regarding how her personal practice of yoga had helped her to integrate yoga into her psychotherapy practice. She said,

But I will tell you what has helped me: it’s my own personal practice…I mean it’s very helpful to do this a lot…to understand how the tools are applied, how they work and what works for the individual. I go back to India every year and I just scratch the surface of yoga therapy. I have been going back for years, every year to the school, to study, to observe.

Ananda explained that her own personal practice has helped her to better understand how to apply yoga practices for clients, and to better understand how these yoga practices work on the individual. Ananda expressed that she never stops learning and believes that she has just scratched the surface of yoga therapy.

Chandra shared her thoughts regarding how her personal yoga practice allows her to better understand the challenges and experiences that clients may have in their own yoga practices. She relayed,

So, I was always working on my own body and working on my energy and breath... So the yoga was really helpful in that, and in understanding what kind of problems people might have with their practice… I always believed that I have to be a little step ahead of my clients who come to me.

Chandra spoke about how doing her own yoga practice allowed her to get connected with her own body and energy. She explained that being connected to her body and energy allowed
her to be more aware of the kind of experiences and problems that her clients may have with their own yoga practice. By engaging in her own yoga practice, Chandra said that she would be one step ahead of her clients.

Lilith spoke about how studying yoga for several years had helped her to better understand how the two systems of yoga and psychology could integrate together in session. She said,

Well, I think the challenge is, when you choose to study both, is that you are clear about what you are doing. That’s why I have taken years to study both deeply because I ran into a lot of questions along the way.

Lilith spoke about running into “a lot question along the way” when she was seeking to combine yoga and psychology. Lilith wanted to understand how the two systems, yoga and psychology, that approach mental healing differently, could integrate with one another. Lilith explained that by engaging in the personal practice of yoga over several years, she was able to better understand how to combine yoga and psychology. Her personal study and practice of yoga and psychology provided her with clarity to understand what she was doing in an integrated yoga and psychotherapy practice.

In this subtheme, several participants shared that their own personal yoga practice had been instrumental in understanding how to integrate yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. Participants said that their personal yoga practice had allowed them to understand the tools of yoga in greater depth and to understand how yoga would affect their clients. For example, Ananda stated that her personal yoga practice taught her about how yoga practice works and how to bring yoga practice to her clients in therapy. Lilith spoke about how her in-depth practice and study of yoga and psychology had helped her to better understand the ways in which yoga and
psychology could combine. For some participants, their personal yoga practice had provided them with a better understanding of yoga and its integration into counselling and psychotherapy.

In this core theme, *acquiring formal yoga education and training*, all participants discussed the particular yoga training and educational experiences they had pursued. Participants mentioned that they had first acquired the yoga training and education that taught them about the foundations of yoga: the basics of yoga technique like postural practice, breathing practices, and meditation, and yoga philosophy, history, and how to teach yoga. This particular stream of yoga education and training was reviewed under the major theme *learning about the foundations of yoga*. Participants continued their conversations and talked about how their interest in yoga for mental health led them to pursue education and training related to the therapeutic applications of yoga, for example taking a yoga therapy training program. This stream of education and training that was related to the therapeutic applications of yoga was reviewed under major theme *learning about yoga for mental health care*. Many participants expressed that they experienced limitations in Western counselling and psychotherapy practice and felt that yoga could address these gaps. Participants discussed that their personal yoga practice had been instrumental in understanding how yoga could be brought to their clients in counselling and psychotherapy.

### 4.3 The Practice of Integrating Yoga into Counselling and Psychotherapy

Participants described how they brought the practice of yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. Participants provided detailed accounts on what aspects of yoga they would bring into therapy sessions and what this integration process looked like. This led to the core theme, *the practice of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy*.

In this core theme, many participants reflected on how they determined if their clients were ready or suitable for practicing yoga in therapy sessions. Participants spoke about obtaining
consent from clients before bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy practice. This major theme is covered under *determining the client’s readiness for integration practice*. Participants mentioned that once they could determine if their clients were ready and suitable for practicing yoga, they would then begin preparing their clients for the practice of yoga in session. Preparing clients for integration is reviewed under the major theme *preparing clients for yoga practice in therapy sessions*. Participants described in detail the aspects and practices of yoga that they commonly brought into counselling and psychotherapy sessions. This topic is reviewed under major theme *bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy*. The major aspects and yoga practices that participants would bring into therapy included yoga models, the yoga techniques, and yoga philosophy.

Lastly, participants shared their observations on the effects of yoga for clients in counselling and psychotherapy. These observations are collected under the major theme *the impacts of yoga on clients in counselling and psychotherapy*.

### 4.3.1 Determining the client’s readiness for integration practice

In this subtheme, almost all participants talked about how they would determine if their clients were ready for and open to practicing yoga in counselling and psychotherapy. Participants had conversations with their clients to determine their previous experiences with yoga and their perceptions and attitudes on practicing yoga in therapy. In addition, they would address any concerns that clients may have with practicing yoga in session. Participants explained that through these conversations they could assess if their clients were open to and ready for practicing yoga in therapy.

Participant Melanie stated that during her first session with clients she was “intentional” in asking her clients about their previous experiences with yoga and their openness to practicing yoga into psychotherapy. Melanie shared,
I would say that I am becoming more intentional, I think as a result of the trauma-sensitive yoga group, to ask everyone as part of any assessment… I ask right away, “Have you done yoga before?” so part of now more my individual assessment processes… I think I have done more process to begin asking that right from the start, so I can incorporate it mindfully right from the start if there is an openness…Some of it will depend on what the response has been to me about the openness to trying new things.

Melanie highlighted that she would be “mindful” and “intentional” about how she would bring yoga into therapy practice. She would determine if her clients were open and ready to practice yoga through an assessment process where she would ask her clients questions regarding practicing yoga in therapy. Melanie stated that she would assess her client’s openness and readiness to practice yoga at the start of psychotherapy. She explained that the responses her clients would give about yoga would help Melanie determine if she would bring yoga into the sessions or not.

Melanie mentioned that if yoga was unfamiliar to her clients, or if the client had expressed concerns regarding practicing yoga or had negative previous experiences with yoga, she would address these concerns prior to integrating yoga into therapy session. Melanie expressed,

So, um, you know for someone who is just generally kind of “this is all new” and it’s concerning to them, or um, they are worried about performance around it, I would try things out very gently and kind of gradually… So, you know, if a youth says that they had a terrible experience, or “it’s not for me at all,” I want to find out a bit more about that…Or they felt less than because they couldn’t do what the teacher was doing, or that everybody else or most of the people in class didn’t look like them, you know, were,
slender, were white, could afford this, could do everything… So I really, um, mindfully talk about that with people.

Melanie explained that if her clients were unfamiliar with yoga or expressed worry about performance, she would discuss those concerns with them and bring yoga more gradually into the sessions. Melanie talked about some of the challenges that her clients had mentioned regarding their previous experiences with yoga, such as being in a yoga class and feeling different from other students in terms of size, race, and socioeconomic status, and feeling like they don’t fit in because they could not perform yoga the same way as others. Melanie would help clients to process these negative experiences with yoga and also correct any misperceptions of yoga that they might have.

Desiree also spoke about having conversations with her clients regarding their experiences and perceptions of yoga before bringing yoga practices into session. Desiree described that she would listen for whether her clients were open and ready to experience yoga in therapy. She said,

So sometimes the client will come to me, “I know you teach yoga and you bring to your session, I am so interested, let’s do it and integrate it for me, that would be wonderful.” Great, so I have a yoga waiver that I will not do any yoga with anybody unless they actually sign my wavier… And there are some people who are very resistant to anything…and you know that I need to go where my client is at, I know that. So there are times that they are not ready to move their body…So again not everybody is open to yoga, and I will never push it.

Desiree mentioned that some clients would seek her out for psychotherapy because they were interested in integrating yoga into their sessions. With these clients, Desiree would bring yoga into the session and have them sign a document that granted her permission to include yoga
practice in therapy. Desiree talked about having other clients who would express resistance
toward doing yoga in therapy, for example, because they did not feel ready to move their body in
therapy or they preferred traditional talk therapy. Desiree explained that she would meet the
clients where they were and would not to push them to do yoga practices if they were not ready
or willing.

Similarly, Lilith mentioned that she would follow the direction of her clients in order to
understand their openness to and readiness for practicing yoga in session. Lilith stated,

Yeah, but I do feel that clients themselves eventually start guiding you in a direction if
you can feel if it resonates with them or not. You know it would feel wrong to, um, bring
in an understanding of the intuitive mind and the wisdom within, and Jung work with
dreams, and Eastern approaches to that realm, if a person is really wanting to work in a
very tangible way, you know,

Lilith mentioned that it would be inappropriate to bring Eastern approaches to the mind if
her clients were not open to that approach and preferred to work from a traditional Western
therapy framework. Understanding the client’s preferences helped Lilith determine if the client
was open and ready to practice yoga in counselling and psychotherapy.

In this subtheme, participants talked about how they determined if their clients were ready
for and open to practicing yoga in counselling and psychotherapy. Almost all participants said
that they would have conversations with their clients during the first few therapy sessions in
order to learn about the client’s perceptions of yoga, past experiences with yoga, and openness to
practicing yoga in session. Participants expressed that these conversations would help them gain
a better understanding regarding the client’s suitability and readiness to practice yoga in therapy.
For example, Melanie talked about asking her clients right away if they have done yoga before
and what their experiences were like. Like many other participants, Melanie expressed that she
would only use yoga if her clients were open to it. Similarly, Desiree spoke about respecting the choice of the client to practice yoga in session. Overall, participants agreed that they would prioritize the client’s preferences and final decision to practice yoga in counselling and psychotherapy over their own desire to include it.

4.3.2 Preparing clients to practice yoga in therapy sessions

Once participants determined that their client was open to and ready for yoga in therapy sessions, they would prepare their clients to practice yoga through a few key processes. Several participants spoke about the three main ways in which they would prepare their clients for integration. These conversations led to the following subthemes: psychoeducation on yoga for mental health, developing the therapeutic relationship, and orienting clients to their body.

According to participants, these three tasks were important to undertake and would help clients develop not only a sense of safety and trust in the therapist but also the mental, emotional, and physical preparedness needed to practice yoga safely and successfully in counselling and psychotherapy.

Psychoeducation on yoga for mental health. A common theme among several participants included providing clients with psychoeducation on yoga. Participants shared that educating their clients about the background of yoga, how yoga practice works, and its impacts on mental health supported clients in understanding the practice of yoga and the relevancy of yoga for their mental health.

Tejal mentioned that she would explain to her clients how yoga impacts the body and mind, and also discussed the philosophy of yoga. Tejal reflected,

And then I will explain to them how the yoga works and what the yogis said…The philosophy, the physiology, the whole thing… And so they understand where we are going, and if that is something that they would like to work on. Then we say, “Okay, I
will take it for another couple of sessions and will see if this is working for you.” Many patients will see that it works.

Tejal expressed that by educating her clients about yoga, like its impacts on the physiology and psychology of the person, and the philosophy of yoga, clients could begin to understand how yoga could impact them personally. According to Tejal, this would lead to clients making better informed decisions regarding practicing yoga in therapy. Tejal shared that she finds most clients experience benefits and success when practicing yoga in therapy sessions. “Many patients see that it works,” she shared.

Tejal went into greater detail to describe what she would specifically teach her clients, such as the links between yoga and stress reduction. She stated,

Then I sit down and I explain to them stress response…understanding of our flight-and-fight response system… So why we practice mindfulness, what happens when we exhale and our parasympathetic system…Umm, and so they will get to see that and they will tell me what they experience, and how that relates to that diagram. Yoga, what we are learning to do is learning how to address that and teach ourselves to release stress through our body and breath, and exhale.

Tejal spoke about providing her clients with a general overview of the stress response system in the body. This provided her clients with an understanding of how their stress was impacting their mind and body. Tejal then educated her clients about how yoga impacts the stress response system in the body and leads to releasing stress in the body. Tejal explained that she ensured her client were well-informed regarding the physiology and psychology of yoga.

Melanie said that some of her clients do not know what yoga is and that she would educate her clients on the meaning of yoga and its various forms. She said,
Some people don’t necessarily know what yoga is, so I will talk a bit about maybe really different forms of yoga. It’s also about kind of how we think about ourselves, how we think about other people, how we treat ourselves, how we treat other people, so it’s like yoga off the mat: How am I with myself?

Melanie shared that would tell her client about the various forms of yoga and also explain the greater meaning and purpose of yoga. Melanie explains yoga as a practice and philosophy that involves bettering our relationship to others and ourselves. Melanie used the metaphor “yoga off the mat: How am I with myself?” as a way of describing that yoga is more than just a physical practice, that it is also about how we live our life and relate to ourselves.

In this subtheme, participants spoke about some of the key points that they would highlight in session regarding yoga and its effects on the mind and body. Participants mentioned that they would educate their clients about the meaning of yoga, the various forms of yoga, and how yoga reduces stress in the mind and physiology. Melanie said that she told her clients about the meaning of yoga and how yoga relates to our relationships with ourself and others. Tejal talked about describing in detail to her clients how yoga impacts the brain, body, and the stress response system. Many participants agreed that providing their client with background information on yoga would give clients a better understanding of why yoga might be beneficial in therapy and how yoga could impact them personally.

**Developing the therapeutic relationship.** Some participants mentioned that the practice of yoga is more than just physical practices, that it requires that the teacher develop a positive and nurturing relationship with the student. In this subtheme, participants expressed that the therapeutic relationship with the client is essential to develop in order to provide a safe and trusting space for the client to practice yoga in session. Participants emphasized the relational aspects of teaching yoga to clients.
Participant Ananda shared that the therapeutic relationship between the therapist and client is a central part of teaching yoga practices to clients. Ananda said,

So in order for them to trust it requires certain elements of trust in the therapist. So yoga therapy is not just “Here is the tool, go.” A lot of it is the dialog and establishing the relationship between teacher and student…So this tool is again is about using the emotional connection with the individual to develop and establish a new orientation within themselves.

Ananda talked about yoga being more than just a set of “tools” that are given to clients, but rather yoga is about developing a therapeutic relationship with the client, an “emotional connection” that has the potential to help clients “establish a new orientation within themselves.” Ananda shared that when the therapist takes the time to have a dialog with the client and establishes a positive relationship, this will then allow the client to have trust in the yoga practices as well.

During our conversation, Ananda went into greater detail regarding the relational aspects of yoga. She spoke about how developing a strong relationship between teacher and student can actually help the student in their yoga practice. She relayed,

So Desikacharya’s favorite way of describing yoga is “yoga is relationship.”…And connection to me will create a different way of practicing because often at the beginning they don’t feel strong enough to do it by themselves. But if they have a belief in me and a belief in us, then they will practice based on that model. Slowly the autonomy happens when they start to see how it’s working, how things are clearing. How they are seeing more clearly, how they are seeing themselves more clearly, the world around them.
Ananda stated that the positive connection between the therapist and client provides the client with the strength and motivation to practice yoga. Ananda explained that this bond is important because initially many clients do not feel strong enough to do yoga on their own. When clients can remember the connection and bond that they share with their therapist, they can then draw upon that connection for strength and support to practice yoga on their own. Ananda explained that over time clients do begin to feel more autonomous to practice yoga on their own, specifically when they see the results of the yoga practice taking effect, such as experiencing old patterns clearing up and seeing themselves and others more clearly.

Like Ananda, Chandra reflected upon the relationship aspect of yoga and how bonding with her client is a central part of bringing yoga into psychotherapy. She expressed,

“Often, it’s a time thing, you know…Once I create a bond with someone, they believe that I see them, and they will take my recommendation. I don’t tell people to do things until we are well bonded.

When Chandra was asked at what point she brings yoga practices into her sessions, she talked about bringing yoga after cultivating a bond with the client. Chandra explained that once clients felt that they were “seen” by her, that they felt understood by the therapist, she would then bring in the yoga practices. She shared that by establishing a relationship with her clients, clients would more likely begin trusting her recommendations regarding practicing yoga.

In this subtheme, participants spoke about how creating a bond and connection with their client was an essential part of bringing yoga into therapy. Some participants talked about the therapeutic relationship providing clients with a sense of trust and safety in the therapist, which could help clients to feel greater trust in yoga practices. Chandra illustrated this point when she said, “Once I create a bond with someone, they believe that I see them, and they will take my
recommendation.” Ananda shared a definition of yoga as “yoga is relationship” and spoke about the importance of the student-teacher relationship in traditional and modern contexts.

**Orienting clients to their body.** Another way in which participants mentioned preparing their clients for practicing yoga in counselling and psychotherapy was by having clients become more aware of their body. This led to the *subtheme orienting clients to their body*. Participants said that from the beginning phases of therapy they would have their clients pay attention to their body, to notice sensations and experiences in their body while they shared their stories. Bringing awareness to the body would begin the process of clients becoming familiar with their body and developing greater self-awareness.

Melanie explained that she began to orient clients to their body from the beginning of their therapy sessions. She directed her clients to pay attention to the physical responses that their body were having during their sharing. She stated,

In those five sessions I may have started with, um, not only talking but just them orienting to their bodies. So I might be saying…“Could we stop for a moment, is it okay to notice whatever sensations might be there in your body?”…If someone is holding the breath I might ask them what that feels like to be holding the breath, I might encourage them to allow the breath a little bit. I am almost tracking that with them and inviting them to do something a little bit differently, asking them to notice how that feels in their body and their mind.

Melanie relayed that she began to “orient clients to their body” by inviting clients to become aware of how their body responded when they shared their stories and experiences. Melanie mentioned that if the client held their breath or tightened their body, she would invite the client to change that pattern, to do something differently, such as take deep breaths or relax the body. Then she asked the client to notice how that change of response would affect the way the
Melanie expressed that she tracked with the client their physical responses and breathing patterns during the session.

Melanie talked about the feedback that she received from clients when they began to pause and notice what was occurring within their body during therapy sessions. She expressed,

And that’s very simple in a sense, but the feedback I get is that that is quite profound, because lots of times those are automatic things we do, we get scared and stressed, and we hold to breathe a little bit, so that’s already bringing some awareness to their experience. I am inviting them to notice their own experience in the moment between us, and allowing some space, a little bit of silence and for them to check in.

Melanie said that her clients found the process of noticing their physical responses during therapy helpful and “profound.” She shared that orienting the client’s awareness to their body allowed them to become aware of their habitual physical patterns under stress or when emotionally triggered. Melanie talked about providing a moment of silence, a pause, during the session to have clients notice what was occurring in their own experiences.

Joseph also said that he brought in body awareness throughout the therapy session by having clients bring attention to their body. He found that for many clients it could be difficult to call attention to their body. Joseph addressed these challenges. He said,

If someone is always like “this, that I can’t relax and I need to be on guard,” so we look for all these things. And for some people it’s torture and literally they can’t do it. Like to have that attention called to their body. So it’s really an uphill progress of bringing that tolerance their body. But it’s often by weaving it into the therapy, “I know this is hard for you now, but it’s going to help you to know what you feel and where you’re at and make life easier”…So it’s very gently pointing them in that direction.
Joseph talked about directing clients to notice the tension and stresses within their body. He stated that although it was hard for many clients to call attention to their body because of the discomfort and tension that their body had been holding, ultimately it would lead to many benefits. Joseph explained that these benefits included helping clients develop tolerance toward their difficult feelings and helping them recognize their personal feelings. Joseph shared that he gently guided clients to notice the body’s physical sensations and responses.

Meera talked about bringing body awareness in the session by guiding clients to become aware of their body and having them reflect on the messages that their body was trying to give them. She expressed,

You know someone who is paralyzed with anxiety …I always bring in that body awareness and even the metaphor, “What is the body telling you? The body doesn’t want to work, what’s it trying to tell you?” Or what does the body need. … yeah, always tie in the body, bring in the body awareness.

Meera described that she directed her clients to notice how their body was responding during the session by asking them various questions such as, “What is the body telling you?” and “What does the body need?” Meera shared that she would tie in body awareness throughout the session by having clients reflect on these questions and pay attention to the responses of their body.

In this subtheme, orienting clients to their body, participants reflected on how they would guide clients to become more aware of the body’s responses during therapy sessions. Participants explained that developing body awareness involved having clients notice the reactions and experiences that their body was having while sharing their stories. For example, Melanie explained that if her clients were speaking about an emotionally triggering experience, she would have her clients pause and notice how their body was reacting and what the reaction was trying to
tell them. Joseph talked about the importance of orienting clients to their body to help them better understand their own feelings. Meera relayed tying in body awareness by having her clients notice the body’s responses and understanding what the body needed.

4.3.3 *Bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy*

After participants spoke about the ways in which they prepared the session and clients for practicing yoga in psychotherapy, they then talked about the particular yoga theories, practices, and philosophies that they would most commonly bring into counselling and psychotherapy sessions. This topic is reviewed under this major theme, *bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy*.

Participants spoke about using certain yoga theories to help them understand their client’s mental health issues from a yogic perspective and framework. This is highlighted under the subtheme *yoga theories*. Participants shared that by using these yogic theories they were better able to determine the needs of their clients from the body, mind, and spirit perspectives, and that this would lead them to selecting yoga practice and therapeutic interventions that could address clients holistically.

The next subtheme, *yoga practices*, includes the specific yoga practices that participants most commonly brought into their therapy sessions. These included yoga asana practice (postural yoga practice), pranayama (breathing techniques), and meditation.

Participants also spoke about bringing yoga philosophy into therapy sessions. Many participants said that they would discuss the major yoga philosophies and teachings that focused on the principles of living an ethical, healthy, balanced, and positive life. This subtheme is reviewed under *yoga philosophy*.

Several participants talked about the manner in which they would approach the integration of yoga practices in counselling and psychotherapy. Participants reflected upon some
of the essential ways in which they would ensure that the yoga practices being brought into session would fit the unique mental health needs of their clients. This subtheme is described under the styles and approaches of yoga.

4.3.3.1 Yoga theories

In this major theme, participants shared that the yoga theories and models that they brought into session served as a framework to help them understand the mental health of their clients on the level of the mind and body and spirit. Almost all participants stated that by using these yoga theories they were able to understand their clients holistically and therefore use those yoga practices and psychological interventions that could address clients holistically.

The most common yoga theories that participants mentioned bringing into therapy were the chakra theory, the pancha kosha theory, and the triguna theory. Conversations about using chakra theory are reviewed under the subtheme the chakra theory. Participants’ reflections on how pancha kosha theory plays into their therapy practice are described under subtheme the pancha koshal theory. The last major theory—and final subtheme—that several participants talked about using in counselling and psychotherapy sessions was the triguna theory. The triguna theory provided participants with an understanding of their clients’ primary energetic state and how it relates to the clients’ current mental health functioning.

The chakra theory. Several participants discussed that they find the yogic theory of the chakras helpful in assisting them to understand the client’s issues and needs from physical, energetic, and psychological perspectives. According to participants, the chakra theory states that the chakras are complexes of energy fields within the human body, are vast in numbers, and correspond to various physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual functions. Participant Ananda defined chakras theory as follows:
Lots of westerners are talking about exploring the themes within the chakras, I guess what’s the best way to describe it, like, um, not complexes, they are like, um….it’s like an energy field that has so many themes linked to it.

Ananda explained that chakras have certain themes linked to them, depending on the location in the body. Ananda mentioned bringing the yogic theory of chakras in her work. She went into greater detail and talked about the energy fields within the chakra system, known as *nadis*. She explained,

But yoga looks at all the nadis and the chakras, and nadis and chakra they are all over the system… There are millions of nadis and chakras. We don’t know enough about the system because it’s an energy system… So what we do is we explore how the prana, the breath, can actually go through the whole system and create a new—unblock the system…So you have to look at the whole system and breath through the whole system.

Ananda spoke about how she looks at the client as a whole system, which includes looking at the functioning of the chakras and nadis. She explained that the chakra and nadis are found all over within the client’s energetic system. When she had her clients do yoga practice, such as breathing techniques, it affected the whole nadis and chakra system. In her practice, Ananda looked at how to help clients unblock the energy flow of these chakra and nadis.

Chandra also talked about how she used the chakra theory perspective in her practice with clients and how this theory guided the therapeutic directions that she decided to take with her clients in session. She shared,

Well the chakra system I pretty much work with it all the time…Say someone has a lot of neck tension, I would talk to them about their sense of belonging and whether they feel connected to the world and those sortss of issue, or if it’s in their stomach I would talk about their power and their self-esteem and how they feel, whether they feel like
themselves or strong…So I use the chakra, the things associated with the chakras to inform my psychological inquiry.

Chandra shared that she would frequently use chakra theory to guide her “psychological inquiry” with clients, referring to using this theory to guide her direction and selection of yoga and psychological interventions. Chandra provided the example of a client experiencing tension in the neck and how, according to the chakra theory, would indicate possible issues of belonging and connection. According to Chandra, if her client presented certain physical tensions, she talked about the corresponding chakra and the related emotional and psychological issues associated with the discomfort. The chakra theory helped Chandra to better understand her clients’ issues and determine the most suitable intervention to bring into session that could address clients holistically.

Joseph also spoke about working with the chakra theory to assist him in understanding his clients’ issues. He mentioned that he linked his clients’ challenges to the corresponding chakras. He explained,

And, um, so, so yeah, so when I came to psychotherapy I was already pretty influenced by yoga... Say you had issues with agency and expressing your own will, you could go at it cognitively, or more from an emotional focus, but you could also go at it, really doing work on the yogic level, working your practice consciously aware around third chakra, you know.

Joseph mentioned that he worked with clients at a yogic level and included the chakra theory to guide his understanding of client issues. He gave the example of using the chakra perspective with a client who was struggling with issues of agency and expressing their will power. Joseph connected this client’s issues as a problem with the third chakra. Joseph shared
that he would consciously bring in practices and interventions that would work on strengthening the third chakra for this client.

This subtheme includes what participants said about using chakra theory in counselling and psychotherapy and how it gave them a holistic understanding of their clients’ issues, which “informs their psychological inquiry,” as Chandra explained. Participants described the chakras as energy fields within the body that are linked to various emotional, physical, and psychological themes. Using the chakra theory to understand their clients’ issues provided participants not only with a greater understanding of the clients’ issues, but it also guided them in choosing suitable interventions and yoga practices for their clients. For example, Joseph expressed that if his client was having issues of agency and will power, he would refer to the third chakra as the primary energetic site where the issue is residing and bring yoga practices to work with the third chakra. Chandra mentioned using chakra theory to understand some of the psychological and emotional issues underlying the physical pain her client presented with.

*The pancha kosha theory.* Another common yoga model that many participants mentioned using in their psychotherapy practice was the pancha kosha theory. Participants explained that using the pancha kosha theory helped them to better understand their client’s issues from a holistic perspective, and it guided their choices of the yoga practices and interventions that they would bring into therapy sessions. Participants described the pancha kosha theory views of mental health from the perspective of five different layers within a person. These five layers include the physical, energetic, emotional, psychological, and spiritual layer. Participants expressed that the yoga and therapeutic techniques and practices they would bring to their client would depend upon where the clients’ imbalances were according to the pancha kosha theory.
Ananda reflected upon how she used the kosha theory to understand her client’s issues from a larger perspective. She described the kosha theory in detail and spoke about how this model informed her therapy practices. Ananda explained,

The yoga therapy model is based on the five mayas, so the five layers right, the five layers of the individual…So the annamaya, pranamaya, monamaya, vigyanamaya, and anandamaya—so all these layers, from the physical, to the breath, to the physiological, to the mind, the intellect, the conditioning, to the wisdom mind behind the intellect. Then of course the ananda, which is closest to the I guess we call it the purusha, the self. It is, um, a place of great joy because it’s at peace. All layers are part of the individual, so when you walk in, if I have the layer of a yoga therapist I am looking at all of those layers.

Ananda explained that the five layers of a human being according to the kosha theory are - annamaya (physical layer), pranayama (breath layer), monamaya (the mind, or emotional mind), vigyanamaya (the intellect, or higher mind), and anandamaya (the true self). She described that all these layers are part of the person and therefore when her clients come in for a session, she will view her clients from all five layers when addressing their issues.

Like Ananda, Lilith also spoke about how she uses the pancha kosha theory to understand and address her clients’ issues. She explained that by understanding where the clients’ issues are within the five layers, she could then use the appropriate techniques and theories to address that area of imbalance. Lilith expressed,

So you know that I see very much in Patanjali and in Vedic teachings systems, they talk very much about the ahamkara, the ego, the manas, the emotion mind, the buddhi, the higher wisdom, intuitive mind, deeper mind, and then the self…If we have women with eating disorders, or have a problem with you know certain self-care things or even impulse control that problem with manomaya kosha, so you need to address it there. And
then you have others with ahamkara, either there is too much ego, too little ego, it gotta be balanced. So the techniques and theories we use I think it depends on where the imbalance is.

Lilith mentioned that the teachings of the pancha kosha theory comes from Patanjali’s Yoga Sutra and Vedic teachings. She then spoke about how she used the pancha kosha theory to inform her of where her client’s imbalances were. Lilith provided the example of a client with eating disorders who struggled with self-care. Lilith expressed that she would address the clients’ imbalances by involving the physical layer, the manomaya kosha. Whereas if a client was having problems with ego and self-identity, she would address these issues primarily on the level of the manas or mental layer. Lilith concluded by stating that the techniques and theories that she brought to the client depended upon where the imbalances were within the five layers of the client.

Lilith continued to elaborate on the pancha kosha theory and explained how this model guided her therapy directions with clients. She expressed how she helped her clients to access the higher layers—the domain of the buddhi, or higher mind, in session. She relayed,

Yeah I think the belief in a higher self, and spirit within and that understanding of the mind that we trying to get to the clients buddhi or the place of wisdom, the place of intuitive guidance and not just work with what we call the ‘manas’ the more conditional emotional mind. It changes the work, that you feel that its not your final destination with a client… so I feel that those models of the mind resonant more with what I see in client, or at least the clients that come to me.

Lilith talked about helping clients shift from the Manas, the conditioned emotional mind to the higher mind, the buddhi, which is the place of intuitive guidance and wisdom. She explained that using this perspective of the pancha kosha theory- that a person has both the
conditional emotional mind and the higher intuitive mind, helped her to understand that the final
destination in psychotherapy was not about staying at the level of the emotional mind, but
helping client access a higher layer of the mind, the buddhi, the wise mind, and the higher self.
Lilith explained that the pancha kosha theory of the mind resonated with her views on the mind
and how she liked to work with her clients.

In this subtheme, *the pancha kosha theory*, participants described using the pancha kosha
theory to help them better understand their clients’ issues and to guide their selection of
techniques, theories, and yoga practices. Some participants provided a description of this model
during their conversation. They described the pancha kosha theory as describing the five layers
within a person: the physical layer (manomaya kosha), the energetic layer (pranamaya kosha),
the mental layer (manamaya kosha), the higher mind (vibhyanamaya kosha), and the true self
(anandamaya kosha). Participants emphasized that using the pancha kosha theory allowed them
to view their clients’ issues from a holistic, multidimensional perspective. For example, Lilith
mentioned addressing the physical layer of a client who was experiencing eating disorders and
impulse control issues. Lilith chose yoga practices that would correspond to where the
imbalance was in the koshas (layers), of the client.

*The triguna theory.* Some participants referred to using the triguna theory, which comes
from yogic literature, to help them better understand their clients’ issues, and to guide them in
choosing appropriate therapeutic approaches and yoga practices. This discussion with participants
led to the subtheme *the triguna theory*. Participants shared that the triguna theory helped them to
understand their clients’ mental and emotional imbalances from an energetic perspective and
guided them to finding the yoga and therapeutic practices that were the right energetic approach
for their clients.
Lilith emphasized the importance of triguna theory in her work and how it largely influenced the ways in which she practiced therapy with clients. Lilith shared, “Absolutely the guna theory has influenced me hugely in my work of understanding the mental emotional imbalances that way, and finding the right approach energetically.”

Lilith expressed that the triguna theory influenced her understanding of the mental and emotional imbalances in her clients. She used the triguna theory to help her select the best yoga practices and therapy approaches for addressing those imbalances. Lilith then elaborated on what triguna theory is and how she used it with her clients. She expressed,

Well, for instance, if we take the Indian theories of the gunas then they would say that the psychology suffering, the mental, emotional suffering has to do with tamas. It could be things like depression, grief, heaviness, lethargy, kind of these stuck emotions. Then they say whatever approach we bring to the work has to be more fierce, it has to be more action oriented, it has to be shaking up the person so because otherwise the person stays stuck…Where then if a person’s psychological suffering has to do with raja guna, which would be more anxiety, panic attacks, you know these kind of very competitive personality A-type things, then the approach would have to be saatvic, more calming, more soothing, you know.

Lilith talked about the three states of a person according to triguna theory. She explained that tamas is a state of psychological and emotional suffering that involves experiencing heavier and stuck emotions, such as depression, grief, and heaviness. She shared that if a client were in a tamas state, then the practices for the client would be more action oriented, such as inviting active movements. Lilith shared that if a client were in a raja guna state they would have challenges involving too much action and movement, such as anxiety, panic, and be a “competitive
personality A-type.” Lilith said that the raja guna personality would require calming and soothing practices that could bring them into balance, the sattva guna state.

Tejal spoke about “pulling” from guna theory in her sessions with clients. She talked about discussing the qualities of chaos, inertia, and balance with her clients. She relayed,

It comes through each session, I will pull something out of the yoga sutras because I have studied them, um, and we would not go deep into what does this sutra mean and what does that mean…that there is different qualities, we talk about chaos versus the inertia or rigidity…Coming back into sattva, coming back into that balance, which is going to be wherever they are. So they are going to start to recognize that this is me going to toward chaos or this is me being too rigid. What is it that I need to do to bring myself back to sattva?

Tejal expressed that although she would not “go deep” into translating and elaborating on the “yoga sutras”, she would talk about the triguna theory from the yoga sutras since she found it to be relevant for her clients. Tejal mentioned that she explained to her clients the three states of “being” as described by triguna theory and would help clients identify for themselves what energetic state they were, such as being rajas state if they were experiencing chaos, or stress state, or tamas state if they were experiencing feeling stuck and rigid. Tejal taught clients how to bring themselves back to the sattva state, the balanced energetic state.

In this subtheme participants mentioned using the triguna theory to help them understand their clients’ mental and emotional imbalances from an energetic perspective. Participants described triguna theory as the three energetic states of a person, which includes the rajas state—the state of chaos and stress, often expressed as anxiety, panic and stress; tamas state—the inertia state, expressed as feeling depressed, rigid, or stuck; and sattva state—the state of balance, calm, and centeredness. Several participants mentioned that the triguna theory assisted them in
determining the right yoga practices and therapy approaches to use with their clients, based on what clients needed from an energetic perspective.

4.3.3.2 Yoga practices.

In this subtheme, participants talked about the specific yoga practices and techniques they commonly brought into their therapy sessions. According to participants, these yoga practices and techniques addressed tension, stress, and anxiety within the body, and worked to bring greater calm, relaxation, and stability to clients. The yoga practices and techniques that all participants talked about bringing into counselling and psychotherapy were yoga asana practice (postural yoga practice), prayanama (breathing techniques), and meditation.

Tejal explained that the yoga practices she used with her clients included yoga nidra, which is a yogic relaxation process, body scan meditation, yogic breathing practices, and yoga asana. Tejal said,

So we might do yoga nidra or body scan, so we may just do some breath focus movement, so they learn to release tension from their neck or from their body. So it will be a pose, then a counter pose. For anxiety, they are carrying it in their system, so they need a practice that starts off you know, to release their anxiety, so they may start off standing, then they go to lying down, where they can start to relax. Whereas if they are depressed they need something maybe starting off laying down and then activate them up.

Tejal relayed that she provided clients with breath, movement, and meditation practices and focused these yoga practices on releasing tension and anxiety in the body. She also said that for her clients with anxiety, she often began with standing poses to help them release anxiety and then gradually brought them to deeper relaxing poses that involved laying down. For her clients with depression, she started off in laying postures and gradually brought them to standing postures, where they worked on activating and energizing themselves.
Similar to Tejal, Lilith mentioned that she would bring in certain groups of postural, breathing, and guided relaxation practices into therapy sessions. She reflected,

If someone had high levels of anxiety, then we know that there are groups of practices of postures and breathing that brings the energy down and calms the nervous system, and actually gets into the sympathetic part of nervous system. So I would focus on that work. More guided relaxation, more deep belly breathing, because anxiety is always stressing the system to kind of a rapid or shallow breath. So my main focus there would be a restorative approach, calming, grounding, solidifying.

Lilith described providing clients with postural, breathing, and guided relaxation practices that calm the nervous system. She described that this group of yoga practices are ideal for clients with heightened sympathetic nervous system activity. She mentioned that practices such as deep belly breathing counteract the effects of anxiety. She concluded her reflections by saying that her main focus was to provide yoga practices that are restorative, calming, grounding, and solidifying for her clients.

Ananda also spoke about the particular yoga practices that she would bring to her clients. Ananda brought in yoga practices such as postural practices, breath practices, and meditation. She said, “A lot of depression and anxiety I tend to work through asana and sound. Lots of pranayama, lots of meditation.” Ananda noted that these yoga practices were selected because they could address the depression and anxiety in her clients.

Chandra discussed similar themes regarding the main yoga practices that she would bring into her sessions with clients. Chandra stated, “All three things...mostly just focusing on their body, focusing on their breath, those types of thing… oh I do teach people meditation too.” Chandra shared that she used yoga practices such as postural practices, breath practices, and meditation to help clients connect to their body and themselves.
In this subtheme, participants spoke about the yoga practices and techniques that they brought into their counselling and psychotherapy practices. The most common yoga practices and techniques participants described teaching their clients were yoga asana, pranayama, and meditation practices. Participants mentioned that these yoga practices all aimed to bring greater calm and relaxation to their clients and to reduce anxiety and tension in the body. For example, Tejal mentioned teaching clients yoga practices, such as yoga nidra, body scan, breath work, and yoga postures, to release anxiety and tension from their body. Lilith talked about using a group of yoga practices that aim at calming the nervous system to help clients feel grounded and relaxed.

**4.3.3.3 Yoga philosophy**

Another common aspect of yoga that many participants spoke about bringing into session was yoga philosophy. Participants highlighted some of the common yogic teachings and ideas they found most helpful for their clients. These findings are grouped under this subtheme. A common theme among many participants was that they brought in teachings from the Patajala’s Yoga Sutras, an ancient yogic scripture, particularly teachings of the Yamas and Niyamas, which are codes of conduct for living an ethical, healthy, and balanced life.

Tejal talked about bringing yoga philosophy into her therapy sessions with clients. She reflected,

Like, some people who are CBT trained and that’s their thing. They are, like, bringing thought recorded in or whatever it is. But my foundation is really Eastern philosophy, whether it’s yoga or Buddhist psychology…If I probably tape recorded every session I’m sure I am bringing some form of Eastern into every session…It’s like my foundation…And I really feel that what works is, I will embody the teaching and talk about the philosophy.
Meera described how yoga philosophy plays a central role in the way she approaches psychotherapy and the teachings that she brings to her clients. Meera expressed that Eastern philosophy is her “foundation” and that her training in yoga has led her to embody the teachings of yoga philosophy. She brings the teachings and philosophy of yoga into almost every session with clients.

Meera continued to elaborate on the aspects of yoga philosophy that she brings into therapy session. She said,

Honestly, almost every single session, it’s the thing I talk about the most…So from yoga philosophy you have the idea of which is if you follow your duty or dharma the rest will follow… even if you think of the Yamas and Niyamas or self-harm, I talk about negative thoughts or self-judgment, that’s a form of self-harm. Right, and so I might not reference the Yamas and the Niyamas, but that’s what I am talking about. You know moderation, um, if you think of Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras.

Meera mentioned she would often talk about the yogic philosophy of dharma—following your duty, and the Niyamas and Yamas, which are codes of conduct for establishing a proper relationship with oneself and others. Meera drew upon the Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras in her therapy practice and discussed with her clients concepts such as achieving moderation in life and recognizing negative thoughts and self-judgment as a form of self-harm.

Desiree also shared that she would teach her clients about the yogic philosophy of Niyamas and Yamas during session. She reflected,

I have learned about the Niyamas and the Yamas, and all that in terms of the yoga philosophy, which I am still trying to get a solid grip of…You know I integrate all of that into my therapy because I think it’s extremely helpful and people love hearing about this stuff. And the Yama and the Niyamas by the way, if you know about them, are all about
our relationship to ourselves and our relationships to others. So if we are working with those Yamas and Niyamas then we can really, you know, it can be really very, very therapeutic.

Desiree explained that her clients responded well to learning about the yogic philosophy of the Yamas and Niyamas. Desiree explained that the teachings of the Yamas and Niyamas are about understanding one’s relationship with oneself and to others. She found that working with the principles of Yamas and Niyamas was very therapeutic for clients.

Like other participants, Melanie talked about the yoga philosophy that she would bring into her psychotherapy. She shared,

And that yoga philosophy is about really accepting and caring, taking care of and being compassionate towards ourselves…I think it’s a lot of that actually, a lot of, um, kind of the “do no harm.” That part of healing is becoming more aware of how we speak to ourselves, how we treat ourselves…And that for me, well, the yoga philosophy is the sense that we are all connected, you know.

Melanie spoke to her clients about teaching the yoga philosophy of acceptance, care, compassion, and doing no harm. She mentioned that she taught her clients about the yogic perspective of healing, which states that healing involves becoming aware of how we treat and speak to ourselves. Melanie summarized her understanding of yoga philosophy as recognizing a sense of connection with all things.

Like other participants, Lilith discussed drawing upon Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras and sharing this yogic philosophy with her clients. She mentioned,

Another framework that I really use a lot is there is a group of sutras from 130 to 140, and that deals about sort of about the night dark of the soul, obstacles that we meet in life, both of a physical, mental, and spiritual nature. How we work with meditative,
contemplative, self-reflective practices to get out to the other side…So that grouping has been very, very influential in my own life and work with students.

Lilith discussed that she would draw upon particular verses from the Patanjali Yoga Sutras, which talk about the dark night of the soul, the obstacles in our physical, mental, and spiritual life that block our progress because she finds these teachings to be relevant to psychotherapy practice. Lilith would inform her clients about using yogic self-reflective practices such as meditation and self-inquiry to overcome personal challenges. For Lilith, these yogic teachings have been very influential in her life and in her work as a therapist with clients.

In this section, participants talked about bringing yoga philosophy into their sessions with clients. Most participants mentioned that they would draw upon the teaching of the Patanjali’s Yoga Sutra. The most common yoga philosophy brought to clients, from Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras, was the teachings of the Yamas and Niyamas. For example, Meera expressed speaking to her clients about the concept of dharma, and the Niyamas and Yamas. Desiree also stated drawing upon the Patanjali Yoga Sutras and teaching her clients about the Yamas and Niyamas. Melanie stated that she brought yoga philosophy in her sessions and talks about the yogic concepts of acceptance compassion, care, and a person’s interconnection with all things. Many participants stated that their clients often shared positive feedback and found it helpful to learn about these yogic teachings in therapy.

4.3.3.4 The styles and approaches of yoga

Many participants talked about the manner in which they approached the integration of yoga practices in counselling and psychotherapy. Participants reflected upon some of the essential ways in which they ensured that the yoga practices being brought into session would fit the unique mental health needs of their clients. These reflections are shared under subtheme the styles and approaches of yoga.
Participants mentioned that in order to deliver the most appropriate yoga practices and techniques for their clients, they modified and individualized the yoga practices for each client. Individualizing yoga practices for clients involved understanding the needs, constitution, and qualities of each client, and then bringing yoga practices that would meet the client’s unique needs and qualities. These reflections are reviewed in the sub-subtheme *individualizing the yoga practice*.

The next sub-subtheme, *yoga for nurturing and calm*, includes observations from participants about the styles of yoga practices that they felt were most appropriate for clients in therapy. The yoga styles that participants described integrating into counselling and psychotherapy were yoga approaches that evoked calm, relaxation, grounding, and nurturance. Participants expressed that this particular style and approach of yoga would be suitable to address the needs of clients with anxiety, depression, trauma, and other mental health vulnerabilities.

*Individualizing the yoga practice*. In this sub-subtheme, some participants talked about how they viewed yoga as a practice that required modifications to meet the unique needs of their clients. Participants spoke about the common ways in which yoga was being used in society, as a “one size fits all approach.” Ananda highlighted this point: “In the yoga classes they will throw us all of the tools…it’s not just ‘let’s throw them everything and hope for the best.’ It kind of does not work that way.” Participants said that this kind of approach and thinking that is common in yoga classes needs to change when yoga is being applied therapeutically for clients with mental health challenges. Participants emphasized that there is no single yoga practice that will be the same for every client. Instead, the counselor and psychotherapist must have an understanding of how to select the most appropriate yoga practices for clients, based on each client’s needs, constitution, and mental health challenges.
Chandra mentioned tailoring the yoga practices to meet the needs of each client and that by individualizing the yoga practice, she was able to select the most suitable and appropriate yoga practices for her clients. She expressed,

As we know, yoga was traditionally taught individually and I think so when you work one-on-one with someone, or a small group with the same populations, you can really tailor to what they need… Sometimes it’s pure, seated meditation, sometimes it’s, um, sometimes its asana, sometimes its pranayama… So I think each person is different you know…I think each session is you know different.

Chandra mentioned that yoga was traditionally taught individually, and yoga practices were given according the person’s needs. Chandra spoke about how each client was unique, and each session was also different. She said that in providing yoga practices it is important to understand where the client is at and what their needs are. She provided the example that some clients needed more meditation, while others benefited from more asana or pranayama.

Ananda emphasized a similar point to Chandra and shared that the yoga practices should be appropriate to the individual. She drew upon the teachings from the yogic scriptures to illustrate this. Ananda stated,

Chapter 3 of the yoga sutra speaks “Vini” yoga, what is appropriate to the individual. So there is no yoga that’s, uh, that’s the same for every people. Everyone is different, in fact even the same individual changes, so accordingly the practices have to change to the individual, based on constitution.

Ananda quoted the Yoga Sutras and described the word “Vini’ from the scriptures as meaning the individualization of yoga practices to meet the unique qualities of the person. She believed that there is no one single yoga practice for everyone, rather, every client should have a
different practice. She said that each person has a unique constitution and also that a person changes over time, and therefore the yoga practices must also change as the individual changes.

Ananda continued to go into more detail and explained the differences between yoga classes and yoga therapy. She mentioned that the yoga therapy considers the individual needs of a person and responds to their symptoms, whereas yoga classes do not focus on the individual needs of a person. She expressed,

In the yoga classes they will throw us all of the tools, right, and a lot of it is asana, physical base. In yoga therapy, it’s the art of application, so you are looking at how does that same tool affect the individual based on the symptoms they are bringing in. So it’s a fine-tuning of these processes, its’ not just “Let’s throw them everything and hope for the best.” It kind of does not work that way.

Ananda highlighted that in yoga classes the teacher does not consider the individual needs of each student but rather “throws” them all the yoga tools and practices and “hopes for the best.” She explained that yoga classes are often more physically focused as well. She then discussed how yoga therapy is more about the “art of application,” meaning that yoga therapy is about understanding how each yoga practice will affect the person, and then choosing the most appropriate yoga practices based on the symptoms that the client presenting. She referred to this as “fine-tuning of the processes.”

In this sub-subtheme, participants relay the importance of understanding yoga as a practice that must cater to the unique needs and constitution of the participants’ clients. Participants explained that different clients require different yogic practices, and that not all yoga practices work in the same way for each client. For example, Ananda mentioned that a therapist should understand yoga as an art of application and how each yoga practice affects the person that they are seeing. Chandra stated how in her psychotherapy sessions she tailored the yoga
practices depending on what the clients needed and where they were at. Participants spoke about understanding that yoga is not a one-size-fits-all approach and that being able to ascertain the correct yoga practice for the client is what separates a yoga class from yoga therapy.

**Yoga for nurturing and calm.** Several participants said that since many clients had stress, anxiety, and tension, the best yoga approach was one that brought relaxation and nurturance and released tension and stress from the body. This common theme among participants led to the sub-subtheme, *yoga for nurturing and calm.* Almost all participants agreed that yoga practices that encouraged calm and relaxation were helpful in counselling and psychotherapy because they allowed the clients to learn how to regulate their feelings, cope effectively with overwhelming emotions, and reduce stress and anxiety.

Lilith explained that for the clinical populations that she saw, a gentle and restorative yoga approach was the most appropriate to bring into session. She said,

I would much more go with a gentler approach of yoga, more as a restorative yoga practice to nurturing and just start getting the ego built up more…And I think there are some techniques of yoga that we can bring into psychotherapy. Such as guided savasana, relaxation, and awareness of the breath, um, because it’s so powerful to, um, calm the nervous system and get them more in themselves and make the work more embodied…

So my main focus there would be a restorative approach, calming, grounding, solidifying.

Lilith mentioned that the yoga approach she brings to her clients in psychotherapy session would focus on calming the nervous system, bringing nurturance, and solidifying and grounding clients. She mentioned that yoga practices such as guided relaxation, savasana, and yogic breathing, are powerful because they help to calm the nervous system and help clients to become more connected to themselves and their body. She explains that this approach helps to develop a healthy ego structure in clients.
Lilith talked about the dangers of working with the classical traditional yoga approaches in psychotherapy with clients who have mental health vulnerabilities and weaker ego structures. She explained that these yoga approaches and styles are fierce and can break down the ego structure and are not suitable for clients with mental health vulnerabilities. Lilith stated,

So you have certain personality disorders, so even mental problems where there is a frail ego structure. And if you then start working with um, deeper meditations and these things, I actually think the psyche is not strong enough to hold. So I think the approach with, um, students that comes that is ready for the real traditional classical work, it’s pretty fierce and it does break down the ego to get to the self, and to get to a much broader expansion of the psyche.

Lilith shared that the classical traditional yoga approach, such as advanced meditation practices, is intense and aims to break down the ego. The clients she saw generally had a frail ego structure, were experiencing mental health challenges, and would therefore not be able to “hold” deeper meditation practices within their psyche. For Lilith, developing a sense of self-identify and a healthy ego structure were the first goals for these populations before they tackled advanced yoga practices.

Tejal talked about her views regarding the kind of yoga approaches and practices she felt were best suited for her clients. She expressed, “Most of the yoga I do use, because it’s stress and anxiety is the focus of the practice, it’s around restorative and slowing them down.” Tejal mentioned that she focused on helping clients reduce and manage their stress and anxiety and she therefore used yoga practices that were restorative and nurturing to help clients to slow down.

Chandra also mentioned using yoga practices that brought greater calm to her clients and helped them regulate their emotions. Like other participants, Chandra felt that her clients needed calming rather than “waking up.” She relayed,
Because I work with people’s emotions a lot, and one of the most difficult emotions to deal with is fear… So one of the main things that a psychotherapist does is calm them down to a degree where they can do effective emotional work…Yeah, and so that’s so where working with the breath… it helps the person get out of the fear state because it calms the whole person down… teaching them different breathing patterns to calm their systems down… Some people need waking up, but most people need calming.

Chandra said that her approach to helping clients achieved greater calm, including calming their nervous system, through yogic practices such as deep breathing. To her, bringing yoga practices that helped clients achieve calm could help them “get out of the fear state” and their difficult, emotional states, which then made it easier to do effective “emotional work” in therapy. Chandra believed that most clients needed calming yoga practices rather than practices that were rigorous and would “wake them up.”

Similar to Chandra, Desiree explained that many of her clients required yoga practices to help them feel calm, nurtured, and grounded. These clients are often in a state of heightened stress and nervous system activity. Desiree mentioned,

So, if you remember, when people get really terrified for example, they numb out, they get frozen, they can’t move…So what we are doing in yoga is teaching people to breath, we’re teaching people that if something comes down and you are not coping and you are having a panic attack, for example, you know, come back to the moment, find something to ground you, and then raise your arms above your head, do a forward fold and allow yourself to get into movement.

Desiree described how she provided her clients with the yoga practices that could help them respond to their intense emotional experiences, like fear, terror, panic, and stress. Desiree explained that teaching clients to breath, to come into the present moment, to do physical yoga
movements and get into the movement, were all yoga practices that could help them to “come back to the moment” and find their stability and grounding.

In this sub-subtheme, participants recognized that most of their clients in therapy are experiencing stress, anxiety and tension, and are in a state of fight, flight, or freeze. Participants spoke about the importance of providing the yoga practices that calmed the nervous system and helped the clients feel relaxed, nurtured, and grounded. For example, Chandra spoke about bringing a relaxing and nurturing yoga approach to her clients so they could calm their emotions, such as fear, and to do effective emotional work in therapy. Desiree shared that the restorative and calming yoga practices that she brought to her clients helped them feel grounded and experience stability when they were emotionally overwhelmed. Tejal reflected on similar points and stated that most of the yoga she did with her clients was restorative and slowed them down.

4.3.3.5 The impact of yoga on clients in therapy

This next major theme that emerged from the interviews was the observation regarding the impact and benefits of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy sessions for clients.

Participants’ observations on how yoga impacted their clients led to the identification of six main subthemes on the ways that yoga impacts clients. These subthemes are: *proper breathing patterns for regulating emotion, embodiment and self-awareness, reconnecting to repressed thoughts and emotions, acceptance toward oneself and life, cultivating non-attachment through a witnessing attitude, and changes in self-perception through relaxation.* Many participants felt that bringing yoga practices into the session could support clients in achieving their therapeutic goals and lead to greater progress in therapy sessions.

*Proper breathing patterns for regulating emotion.* Almost all participants emphasized the importance and relevancy of developing proper breathing habits so they could benefit as
much as possible from their yoga practices. According to participants, these benefits included better emotional regulation, relief of distress, reduction in anxiety, and shifting energy levels. These observations are collected under this subtheme.

Ananda explained that practicing proper breathing with yogic movement was essential to maximize the health benefits of the yoga practice. For this reason, Ananda emphasized breathing technique throughout her clients’ therapy sessions. She reflected,

I just want them to be present and make sure they are getting the breath proper for the movement, otherwise it is just movement, it’s just exercise, but it’s the breath that’s going to change the nadis, right. So I have to make sure that they are doing it properly and they are breathing properly so they don’t go home and repeat it improperly… If we can change the prana, everything else will start to follow. So we work the prana… But the movement of course this opens the chest and all that, but mainly because it forces them to inhale.

Ananda explained that yoga without proper breathing was just another form of exercise and would not offer clients the benefits that came with aligning yogic movement with proper breathing. Ananda talked about proper breathing as being the main agent that helped to “change the nadis” and the “prana,” referring to the energy flow within the client. Ananda spoke about how movement opened the body, and when combined with breath could change the prana, the flow of energy. According to this perspective, when the prana changes, the mind and body follow.

Desiree also mentioned the importance of having clients practice yogic breathing with yoga movement. She said,

And so encouraging breath is extremely important in my training, there is never a time that I guide an asana without a breath, with guiding that breath. So you know for example, every time we open up our bodies we breath in, every time we exhale we breath
out. So I am teaching them a skill so when they are actually going home for a home practice.

Desiree stated that she always guided yoga asana with proper breathing. She explained that combining proper breathing with movement is a skill that she taught her clients so that they could practice this breath and movement combination on their own. Desiree mentioned that correct breathing was an “extremely important” aspect of her yoga training and her work with her clients.

Desiree described in greater detail how she integrated breath work with postural practice in her therapy practice. She expressed,

We might do an asana or, um, a particular breathing practice, so there is numbers of those that I do that involve a little bit of movement along with a breath practice. But it might be something as simple as someone sitting with their hands on their legs. They might breath in and bring their hands up, exhale bring their hands to their heart center. Just notice their breath and notice where they feel their breath in their body, just take a couple of breaths. Desiree provided an example of a yoga practice that involved a client moving with breath. She spoke about having her clients notice their breath at the end of the yoga posture, to pause, to observe how their breath felt in their body, and to then assume a resting position.

Melanie said that she would integrate both breath work and yoga asana into the therapy sessions, and found that this combination provided great benefits to clients experiencing anxiety. She explained,

I find that the movement and the asana alone, with breath, I feel is quiet important with experiences like anxiety, because in people already there is movement in the body, they are jumpy, they are stressed, and the heart rate might be up, or depressed. So to bring
some movement brings a bit of relief and they don’t have to sit still and do only breath work.

Melanie expressed that for clients with anxiety and stress, increased heart rate or depressed heart rate, breath practice with movement is often most helpful, since client are already “jumpy” and are wanting to express movement in their body. Sitting still to do the breath work might be difficult for these clients, due to their restless and anxiety, and therefore providing movement with the breath work can offer greater relief and ease of practice.

In this subtheme, participants shared that correct breathing patterns, based upon yogic teachings of breath work, were central to how they taught clients yoga practices, including postural practices. Participants frequently talked about combining postural practice with proper breathing for maximizing the benefits of the yoga. For example, Ananda said that proper breathing with yoga was what differentiated yoga from exercise. Melanie conveyed that she brought breath work and yoga asana together, and that she noticed this combination was especially helpful for clients experiencing stress and anxiety. Overall, for many participants, encouraging proper breathing was an important part of their yoga training, and they continued to integrate breath work throughout the therapy sessions with clients.

**Embodiment and self-awareness.** This subtheme includes reflections upon how yoga practices helped participants’ clients cultivate greater embodiment and self-awareness. Through moving mindfully in the yoga asanas, and practicing meditation and breath awareness, participants observed that their clients were able to become more connected to their body and develop greater awareness about their mental health and emotional states. Participants used the word *embodiment* to describe clients’ connection to their body and their cultivation of self-awareness.
Joseph talked about bringing mindful movement and breathing practices into the session, and how these practices helped his clients achieve greater connection to themselves and to their body. He referred to this as teaching clients “embodiment.” Joseph relayed,

To just sit with one person and literally do a movement very slowly and breathe, you do that movement and just be mindfulness of these very micro movements, is a way to actually learn embodiment...I think when you go in and you have a sense of your practicing with ahimsa and with compassion, and a sense of more exploration and less sense of having to get somewhere. Just these little movements become very powerful in beginning to connect with your body, the space is safe enough... So, yeah, it’s bringing more yogic principles as well to it.

Joseph explained that he guided clients into the yoga postural practice mindfully and slowly so that they could become aware of the micro movements and cultivate self-awareness and embodiment. For Joseph, bringing the yogic principles of compassion, exploration, letting go of goals, and moving with mindful attention created a powerful practice for clients and helped them feel safe enough to connect with their body.

Similarly, Chandra noticed that when her clients practiced yoga, they became more attuned to their body and developed a greater self-awareness. She shared,

And they need a regular time when they tune into their body and yoga is really good for that because you have to really tune into your body. They have to keep an awareness of what’s happening in their bodies so they know if some tension is building up.

Chandra emphasized that having clients practice yoga regularly allowed them to set aside the time for self-awareness—bringing their attention back to themselves to notice what was occurring within their body. She explained that yoga was a great way to help clients develop awareness of the body because yoga required a deep level of “tuning into their bodies.”
Tejal brought up a similar point regarding how the practice of yoga supported her clients in getting into the body and noticing what was occurring within themselves. She said,

It’s not about forcing them into the pose, it’s about using the pose to get them into the body. And that’s where "Sthira Sukha Asana" comes in, is that, they don’t force themselves, that they are kind, and that we are using this to kind of notice what is in our body.

Tejal mentioned the yoga sutra verse “Sthira Sukha Asana” and talked about how this verse reflected the understanding that the yoga poses should not be done forcefully but rather in a “kind” way that helps the clients gently notice their body.

Conversations with Melanie echoed similar perspectives as other participants regarding how yoga practices encouraged clients to cultivate greater self-awareness and connection with their body. Melanie explained,

When we slow down and pause and pay attention to our bodies, lots of things can pop up to the surface… So if I am doing a tree form next to them, I am not going to do a more elaborate tree pose… You know I might just have a few cues around you know “Maybe you would like to try this,” ’cause I want them to have the experience of the asana… I want them to have introception, to be able to go inside and notice their own experience.

Melanie stated that by teaching clients the simpler forms of the yoga asana and providing a few instructions, this would help clients to develop “introception,” which involves clients paying attention to their own thoughts, feelings, and sensations. Melanie believed that introception is a central part of helping clients learn how to “go inside” and notice their own inner experiences. According to Melanie, the process of paying attention to the body allowed the clients to slow down and bring to surface old thoughts, feelings, and memories.
This subtheme includes observations that yoga practices taught participants’ clients to connect with their body, become more aware of their thoughts and feelings, and develop embodiment and self-awareness. Joseph shared that teaching his clients to move mindfully through the yoga practices allowed his clients to learn embodiment and cultivate self-awareness. Tejal explained that the practice of yoga involved teaching clients how to get in tune with their body. According to participants, yoga practices demand a deep level of “tuning into the body” and introception and help clients to pay attention to their inner world.

**Reconnecting to repressed thoughts and emotions.** Participants continued to talk about the ways in which yoga practices impacted their clients. Participants said that many times when clients were practicing yoga in session, clients mentioned having difficult memories arise, such as remembering old trauma and experiencing distressing thoughts and feelings. Participants recognized that these thoughts, feelings, and memories were valuable therapeutic content that could be further explored in psychotherapy. These observations led to the emergence of the subtheme, *reconnecting to repressed thoughts and emotions.*

Melanie spoke about her clients practicing yoga in session and experiencing old memories, feelings, or thoughts resurfacing. For many clients according to Melanie, they may have previously tried to avoid that particular distressing thought or memory. Melanie reflected,

> When we slow down and pause and pay attention to our bodies, lots of things can pop up to the surface. And it might be, um, a memory or a thought that perhaps a person has been going “I don’t want to go there, I don’t want to think about that form of violence.” We are slowing down in the asana or there is a movement with the asana, it brings that up, and they’re triggered about that.

Melanie shared that when clients began to slow down and pay attention to their body during yoga practices, “lots of things can pop to the surface,” such as unpleasant memories and
thoughts around their trauma. Melanie acknowledged that certain yoga postures could trigger these unpleasant thoughts and memories. She continued to talk about how she addressed these triggering situations for her clients. She spoke about processing unpleasant thoughts and feelings as a part of the psychotherapy practice. She explained,

Whatever that yoga form is, and then I want to know again the impact of it, how their body is afterwards and what’s happening in their body after the asana, what they notice, what they notice about their breath. What if anything has happened with their thoughts, um, and their feelings… But just to go back to individual, I want to incorporate the psychotherapy with the asana so I like to have time to do some processing afterwards.

Melanie mentioned that she would address the impacts of yoga practices on her clients by asking client certain questions such as the following:

- How did the body feel after yoga practice?
- What did clients notice about their breathing?
- Were there any changes in thoughts and feelings after yoga practice?

Melanie helped her clients to process the thoughts, feelings, and sensations that arose from their yoga practice.

Chandra acknowledged that her clients often experienced various sensations and emotional patterns arising from practicing yoga in session. Chandra spoke about addressing these emotional patterns and sensations in therapy. Chandra stated.

So I mean, for example last week was like someone came in, we did some a couple of asanas, we checked in with what came up after meditation, she felt really a lot of sensations in her throat and was able to connect that with not expressing herself. Slowly I
gave her some, like um, seed syllable that is associated with the throat chakra, so she was to practice.

Chandra provided an example of a client who was practicing yoga *asana* and meditation and began to feel strong sensations arising in her throat. Chandra processed this experience with the client and helped the client link the sensations in the throat to not being able to express herself. Chandra then provided specific yoga practices, such as yoga sounds and seed syllables, that would help her client address challenges in self-expression.

Desiree spoke about similar experiences regarding yoga practices bringing up old emotional content and negative patterns in her clients. Desiree explained that when her clients practiced yoga postures, they would often begin to notice an inner critical dialog arising. Desiree said,

So if you get into a tree pose, for example, on the mat, and all those voices come up in your mind, “Oh my god, I couldn’t believe I couldn’t balance, what’s the matter with me? Everybody else is doing it…” Or you are like holding a warrior two position forever…and you want out…and you are like “When is this over already?”…And so we talk a lot about what has come up for you and let’s talk about all those voices and thoughts in your head that come to you on your mat. Let’s actually deconstruct some of that and, um, see, you know, how that impacts on the mat as well as off the mat.

Desiree talked about her clients noticing the critical voices that emerge in their mind while trying to hold a yoga posture. She said that the inner dialog that emerges from doing yoga postures can often be helpful to look at since these voices may reflect a limited pattern of thinking that a client holds in their general life, “off the mat” as Desiree described it. Desiree further said that she deconstructed these critical voices with clients in therapy sessions and helped clients understand the impacts that these voices have in their lives.
This subtheme included participants’ observations of clients re-experiencing old emotions, thoughts, memories, and traumas while practicing yoga in session. For example, Melanie acknowledged that certain yoga postures triggered unpleasant thoughts and memories in her clients and that she took the time to discuss these experiences with them. Participants described that the act of slowing down and paying attention to the mind and body could bring to surface what clients had been holding inside and avoiding. Bringing awareness to old thought patterns and difficult feelings and processes in therapy was a key part of helping clients in therapy.

**Acceptance toward oneself and life.** Another common observation made by many participants was that yoga practices helped their clients develop greater tolerance and acceptance toward themselves and life, the topic of this next subtheme. Participants mentioned that yoga practices, such as breathing, asana, and meditation, taught clients to “be” with what is and thereby develop their capacity to accept and tolerate difficult thoughts, feelings, and experiences. As a result of developing acceptance, clients could better cope with life challenges.

Lilith mentioned helping her clients bring greater tolerance and acceptance to their difficult thoughts, feelings, and sensations through yoga practices. She spoke about client learning to “hold” and “witness” themselves through yoga practices. Lilith said,

> To be with what comes up, whether it’s something painful, sad, pleasant, and being able to hold it, witness it, without trying to push it away…without trying to analyze it and going to it and develop the story…So you are actually teaching people, I think, very powerful ways of self-regulation and witnessing…But the way that I am with them is more in a way of mirroring and teaching them what it means to witness and to hold what comes up from the body, the mind, the emotions, without being reactive.
Lilith relayed that yoga teaches her clients how to witness their discomfort, to become less reactive toward their thoughts and feelings, and to learn “to be” with what arises. She spoke about practicing yoga with clients in the session to mirror to them the process of being non-reactive and witnessing the mind. Lilith explained that yoga teaches clients a powerful way of self-regulating and that they can take this tool of being able to witness themselves and “hold” what comes up at home and in their daily lives.

Melanie also explained that by teaching her clients to notice their own thoughts, feelings, and sensations through yoga practices, her clients began to learn tolerance for and acceptance of themselves and uncomfortable physical sensations. Melanie expressed,

What do they experience? Is it a ringing? Does it feel like butterflies? Is it heavy or light? So, I am wanting to support them to notice, spend some time with the body, to tolerate it a little bit…to also then work with a little bit.

Melanie mentioned that she was supporting her clients to spend time with their body so they could develop more tolerance to the sensations and feelings that arose within themselves. For example, if Melanie’s clients felt a heaviness or butterflies during their yoga practice, Melanie would support them in maintaining awareness of and tolerance for these sensations.

Joseph reflected on a similar point when he talked about his observations of clients developing greater tolerance for discomfort in the body or difficult feelings as a result of paying attention to their body during yoga practices. He described,

Like to have that attention called to their body… For some people it’s torture and literally they can’t do it. So it’s really an uphill progress of bringing that tolerance there. But it’s often by weaving it into the therapy. “I know this is hard for you now, but it’s going to help you to know what you feel and where you’re at and make life easier.
Joseph explained that many of his clients found it difficult to bring attention to their body: “It’s torture,” he said. He helped his clients develop awareness and tolerance to these feelings and sensations by bringing in yoga practices such as meditation or gentle yoga movements.

This subtheme described participants' reflections about how yoga practices taught their clients to develop tolerance for and acceptance of their difficult thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations. Participants described how yoga practices, such as yoga asana, breath work, and meditation, taught clients to observe themselves, to be present, and to hold space for what is arising. For example, Lilith said that doing yoga with the clients helped them learn how to “witness” what is coming up in their mind and body, without being reactive. Melanie talked about supporting her clients in spending time with their body through yoga practices and thereby learning to tolerate what is arising within the mind and body. Participants explained that when clients can develop tolerance and acceptance toward their difficult feelings and sensations they also learn to better cope with difficult life experiences.

_Cultivating non-attachment through a witnessing attitude._ Some participants explained that meditation, yoga asana, and breathing practices helped their clients to practice “witnessing” the mind and develop greater non-attachment toward difficult thoughts and feelings. These points are shared under the subtheme _cultivating non-attachment through a witnessing attitude._ Participants expressed that witnessing and non-attachment could ultimately lead clients to treating the contents of their minds more objectively.

Tejal said that through yoga practices her clients were able to cultivate more objectivity toward their mind and ego. Tejal observed that from this objectivity clients could learn to better recognize their true self from their egoic self. She mentioned,

And when they can start to see that, they can start to understand that they are not their mind, that they are not this feeling of "I," that they are not this ego. And that those
thoughts are going to be there, but as they strengthen who they are, they can start to choose to listen to the mind or choose to not to… And I think that is super-duper important… know what is coming up in our heads and not allow ourselves to always have to get so attached to those stories.

Tejal reflected that when clients begin to understand that they are not the mind or the ego, clients can then recognize the power that they have in choosing to listen to their thoughts or not. Tejal mentioned that yoga practices taught her clients to have less attachment to thoughts and the “stories” they tell themselves.

Meera talked about the yogic principles of meditation, which involved “witnessing” and “watching yourself,” teaching clients better emotional regulation and anger management. She said,

I just think that for emotional regulation or coping with anger management or emotional regulation or whatever, the yogic principle, the meditation principle is all relevant. It’s all about being able to observe yourself, watch yourself and respond with your wise mind as opposed to your more, um, primal mind.

Meera explained that the meditation principle of witnessing yourself and observing thoughts and feeling allowed a person to respond with the “wise mind” instead of the “primal mind.” She stated that this principle was relevant in helping clients have better emotional regulation and to cope with their anger.

Meera continued to speak about bringing in yoga philosophy and a combination of the “here and now” approach to instruct clients on cultivating a “witnessing” attitude. She used metaphors to reflect the teaching of observing thoughts in her sessions with clients. She expressed,
So I try to be a combination of the here and now and also integrating the philosophy and how they can apply it. I use their language, people usually come up with their own language or their own metaphors, then I elaborate on that… I might say, like, “Actually, is that thought real or a passing cloud that you can observe passing through the sky?” Rather than saying, “That is a distorted thought,” I can say, “Well, yeah, we have a million thoughts that come into our mind, why do you need to listen to it?” You know? Meera shared about using the client’s language to describe the yogic teachings of observing thoughts and treating thought as impermanent. Meera brought metaphors such as “…is that thought real or a passing cloud that you can observe?” into the therapy session to illustrate the nature of impermanence in a way that her clients could understand.

Desiree also spoke about how yoga and meditation taught clients to develop a witnessing attitude toward their thoughts and feelings. She reflected,

So you know the basic thing in terms of what I do teach my clients is that you know what meditation and yoga allows us to do is to notice thoughts, notice where they are going, see the stories, but then bring our awareness present to the present moment, time and time, and over and over and over again… Using that beginners’ mind, right, um, and then allowing ourselves to do that by anchoring awareness in either our big left toe or, um, on the asana we are getting into, and or the breath that we are in.

Desiree mentioned that yoga practices taught her clients to develop greater self-observations, to “notice thoughts,” observe the stories they told themselves, and to return their attention back to the present moment. Desiree continued to explain that when clients practiced anchoring their awareness throughout the body, through yoga posture or breathing techniques, it helped them “get out of their heads” and return back to themselves.
This subtheme describes the reflections of participants regarding how the practice of yoga could help their clients develop a witnessing attitude toward their thoughts and feelings. Some participants described this as observing oneself, noticing one’s thoughts, or watching thoughts like passing clouds. Participant Tejal said that cultivating a witnessing attitude could help clients separate their sense of self from their thoughts so they could begin to understand that their thoughts did not define them. Similarly, Meera explained that she used metaphors to describe the yogic philosophy of thoughts being impermanent and to teach her clients to view their thoughts from the place of “witnessing.” Many participants explained that having clients learn to observe their thoughts as a witness allowed them to be less attached to their thoughts and feelings and to use their “wise mind” as opposed to their “emotional mind” to experience greater emotional regulation.

Changes in self-perception through relaxation. Participants frequently talked about yoga practices creating feelings of deep relaxation and calm in their clients, and how these experiences led to some of the greatest changes and benefits for their clients. This subtheme is explored under changes in self-perception through relaxation. Participants emphasized that when clients began to experience deep relaxation, clients would experience themselves and their body in a new way, which in turn would lead to changes in self-perceptions. Participants found that for many clients with high anxiety and depression, experiencing deep relaxation was a new experience that gave them hope and helped them feel empowered regarding changing longstanding patterns of anxiety and stress.

Tejal provided an example of a client who had been experiencing stress and tension for a long time. By practicing yoga, this client could achieve a deep state of relaxation. Tejal relayed that this was a significant moment for the client. She shared,
So I have one woman who is currently, um, you know fighting a legal court battle, she has back pain and is incredibly stressed. For her to get to a point of relaxation, like at one point she could feel her stomach gurgling, and she said, “I have not felt my stomach gurgle,” because she has been so stressed and tensed…She was like, “I don’t usually feel this.” So for them, they actually expressed feeling relaxed and they don’t experience that usually… It’s amazing for them to know that they can experience their body in a different way.

Tejal said that for many of her clients who had been under prolonged periods of stress and tension, the experience of deep relaxation in the body was a significant moment for them because it provided these clients with a new way of experiencing themselves. For Tejal, witnessing her clients experience deep relaxation after a long period of time was rewarding and “amazing to see.”

Tejal continued to speak about the effects of relaxation on her clients, specifically relaxation leading to reductions in anxiety and depression and opening clients up to new perceptions about life. She mentioned,

What I find incredibly rewarding is that a lot of my patients are difficult, and you know they have high anxiety scores, they are depressed, not working…When you actually see someone who is like, “I feel better,” even within 20 minutes of doing a pose or doing breathing, they can say, “I feel so relaxed, I don’t want to fight anymore,” or whatever it is that they come up with. I think this is incredibly rewarding.

Tejal talked about the impacts of relaxation on clients with high levels of anxiety and depression. She relayed that doing yoga practices with them, such as breathing and yoga postures, provided these clients with a deep sense of relaxation and helped them change their experiences and perspectives regarding their current life challenges. She provided the example of
a client who within 20 minutes of doing yoga was able to achieve a state of relaxation where she realized that she no longer wanted to “fight” with her struggles. The relaxation experienced from yoga helped this client to change her perspectives regarding the conflicts she was facing.

Alisa also spoke about the experiences that her clients would have when they began to feel the stillness and restfulness from practicing yoga. She said,

You know you can talk about it all you want, but giving people the experience of what it is like to be still, and stop and rest, it’s usually all you need to do. Until people are like, “Okay, something is here, what is this? I want to learn more of this. I want to practice more.”

Alisa explained that the experience of stillness and restfulness that came from practicing yoga was impactful for clients. Once clients could feel the effects of relaxation from yoga, they expressed an interest in continuing learning about and practicing yoga. Alisa noted that providing clients with the experience of stillness, through practicing yoga, was more impactful than simply talking about stillness and restfulness with clients.

Melanie described the impacts of yoga for clients who experienced high anxiety and depression. She said that yoga provided these clients with a sense of calm and relaxation and that this experience empowered her clients. She shared,

Like, certainty for high anxiety and depression, I felt like use of pranayama could be calming and it could be restorative. It could and did help some clients actually feel empowered and have a sense of agency. Like they could feel like “This is a strategy I could use in my own life, away from counselling, you know, and I can use that.

Melanie said that when clients learned to evoke a sense of calm and relaxation through practicing yoga, they developed a sense of greater agency and empowerment because they realized that they had a powerful tool that they could practice outside of therapy on their own.
Participants reflections in this major theme describes the impacts of yoga providing clients with calmness, relaxation and change in self-perceptions. According to participants, this was a significant experience for many of their clients who had been living in a state of stress and tension for prolonged periods of time. Participants said that when their clients changed their internal state from stress and anxiety to relaxation, they experienced changes in self-perception. For example, Melanie said that the restorative and calming impact of yoga practices on her clients provided them with a sense of empowerment and agency. Tejal provided an example of a client who had experienced deep relaxation in her body, after having prolonged experiences of stress and tension, and that this experience had changed the client’s perceptions of the struggle and “fight” that she was having.

The core theme, the practice of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy, summarizes how participants brought various aspects and practices of yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. The first process that participants described in their practice of integration was determining if their clients were ready for and open to practicing yoga in therapy sessions. This point was discussed under major theme determining the client’s readiness for integration practice. Once participants determined that yoga practice was a suitable option for their clients, they prepared their clients to practice yoga in therapy. This major theme was reviewed under preparing clients to practice yoga in therapy sessions. Therapists prepared their clients by providing them with psychoeducation on yoga and mental health, developing a therapeutic relationship, and orienting clients toward their body. Following these conversations, almost all participants went into greater detail regarding how they would choose the appropriate yoga styles and practices for their clients. In the next major theme, bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy, participants talked about the specific yoga theories, practices, and philosophies that they would most commonly bring into session. Lastly, participants provided their reflections
on what they had observed were the impact on and benefits of yoga for their clients. This major theme was reviewed under the impact of yoga on clients in therapy.

4.4 The Challenges of Integration and Future Directions

In this fourth and final core theme, the challenges of integration and future directions, participants spoke about the challenges they encountered when integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. They shared their observations and reflections regarding the ethical challenges and restrictions of certain yoga practices, categorized under the major theme, the challenges of integration. Participants also talked about what they thought the future direction for the practice of yoga in the field of counselling and psychotherapy could be. These thoughts are reviewed under the major theme future directions.

4.4.1 The challenges of integration

This major theme includes observations about the difficulties the participants encountered when practicing yoga in counselling and psychotherapy. Many participants shared that they encountered restrictions about what they were allowed to do and not allowed to do from the regulating bodies that they belonged to for their profession as a therapist. Participants shared that the ethics of counselling and psychotherapy practice made the work of bringing yoga practices into sessions challenging at times because of the confusion regarding what they were or were not allowed to practice.

Desiree mentioned that the restrictions and ethics of psychotherapy practice, under the college that she belonged to, had made it challenging for her to do the work of integration. She said,

Our college, our college seriously. And you know I don’t blame them, it’s all new, it is so new in terms of integrating yoga into psychotherapy. Um, I have to be super-duper careful
and I know that, but there is a lot of disconnect between what we want to do in therapy, yoga therapy for example, which involves touch, and what we can do in the ethics, in terms of social work. So that’s definitely challenging.

Desiree explained she had to be very careful in her work of integrating yoga into psychotherapy practice because there are restrictions on what she is allowed to do based on the guidelines of and ethics of the college of social workers that she belongs to. She gave the example of yoga therapy involving touch and adjustments and the practice of psychotherapy having certain ethics and restrictions around touch. Desiree explained that since the field of yoga in psychotherapy is relatively new and emerging, the college that she belongs to is still navigating the rules and regulations of yoga in therapy.

Chandra noted what she felt were the challenges of bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. The regulations and restrictions under the college and governing body of counselling and psychotherapy created challenges in her work on integration. Chandra relayed,

Yeah, some of it is difficult. You know they are getting more difficult now, they are. So when I started up…it was pretty free. And now there is a lot more difficulty in what you are supposed to do and not supposed to do. So to mix things up is tricky, I feel for the therapists who are coming up.

Chandra said that when she began the practice of therapy, there were fewer rules and regulations on what could be done in therapy practice. She felt the practice of therapy was “pretty free” when she first began. She stated that later it had become more difficult to understand the boundary of integration, what was accepted or not accepted because there were more rules and regulations governing practice later. She mentioned that the “mix up” of bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy could be “tricky.”
Similarly, Lilith spoke about how the regulations in psychotherapy made it difficult to practice integrating yoga into psychotherapy sessions. She shared,

I see them coming together but it gets a little difficult with some of the regulation in psychotherapy. So because of that, and even just in many ways they want to us to keep those things separate…I think in an ideal world I would like to work with them completely together, but it gets difficult for those reasons. So people that work with me one-on-one with yoga therapy or with yoga, and then I work with a completely Eastern approach.

Lilith talked about how she would ideally like to offer her clients the full spectrum of yoga therapy in combination with psychotherapy. However, she finds that the regulations of psychotherapy made this integration difficult. Lilith spoke about how there were aspects of yoga that the regulatory body wanted to keep separate from psychotherapy, which she abided by in her psychotherapy practice. However, when clients asked her for more yoga therapy work, she would separate it from psychotherapy practice and provide them with the traditional yoga therapy approach under the practice of yoga therapy.

This major theme includes details about what participants considered to be the challenges of integrating yoga into counselling psychotherapy practice. A common theme among many participants was the ethics and regulations of psychotherapy and counselling, the governing college that they belonged to, and their rules and regulations around what was allowed in counselling and psychotherapy. Participants shared that for this reason they were very careful on how they brought yoga into counselling and psychotherapy and what they did with clients in terms of yoga. For example, Desiree mentioned that she would not provide touch to her clients when practicing yoga in therapy, whereas in her yoga therapy training, offering touch was considered part of yoga therapy practice. Chandra stated that she found regulations and rules on
what was allowed in psychotherapy practice were becoming increasingly restricted. Many participants echoed similar concerns and shared that due to the ethical regulations of practice, they found it challenging to navigate what was allowed or not allowed in the practice of yoga in counselling and psychotherapy.

4.4.2 Future directions

Reflections on the future directions of yoga in counselling and psychotherapy practice are reviewed under this major theme, future directions. Most participants expressed their beliefs about the field of mental health continuing to embrace and further support yoga being integrated into counselling and psychotherapy practice, and into the mental health field at large. Participants said that they had encouraged the mental health field and medical field to begin considering the many benefits of bridging body-oriented and Eastern approaches, like yoga, into mainstream mental health practices.

Meera spoke about her perspectives regarding yoga and similar body-oriented approaches becoming more widely accepted in the practice of counselling and psychotherapy. She talked about the resistance that she had initially experienced when practicing integration, but she noticed over time that she received more acceptance for her work. Meera said,

I think any of us do body-oriented stuff, we sometimes get subtle messages like we are not doing talk therapy and it’s a bit more valued… Like when I first told my manager I ask people to connect to their bodies and we would follow what the body wanted, he looked at me like “Are you kidding me?”… I would say that over time my manager has become more responsive…but overtime I would say that there is a great number of staff here who do mindfulness, and the yoga program there is three of us across two programs. We are doing something that has not been done before.
Meera shared that she received messages from her workplace that her approach of focusing on the body in counselling and psychotherapy was initially not fully valued or accepted. However, over time she noticed that people’s perceptions regarding integrative and holistic approaches in therapy became more accepting. She provided the example of her workplace bringing in a yoga and mindfulness program for clients, which had never been done before there.

Joseph described his future vision of yoga being accepted and integrated into mental health care systems like psychiatry. He spoke about the urgency of bringing in more holistic approaches into the world in order to address the increasing suffering of people. Joseph stated,

I think the suffering is just going up and up in the world…maybe making some pretty serious adjustments in the next few years, there is no better tool for meeting the change…

I think that yoga is such a powerful foundation for any kind of change or transformation. It’s a beauty for me, it can serve me in transformation… I just hope that, um, the whole mental health care system will continue to become more open to this, especially, you know, areas like psychiatry.

Joseph mentioned his beliefs regarding the increasing suffering in the world and that is was calling for a “pretty serious adjustment.” He saw yoga as a “tool” that could help with this transformation and change in the world. He mentioned that yoga had transformed him and he hoped that branches in the mental health care system, such as psychiatry, would begin to further accept the integration of yoga into mental health care.

Alisa also reflected on what she thought the future directions for the field of counselling and psychotherapy would be. She talked about the new wave of therapy being the mind-body approaches. She said,

I think that this like new way of, um, you know, the new wave of therapy…This is considered the fourth or fifth wave of therapy and we are going to see a lot more of this.
We are calling in trauma-sensitive yoga training, we are calling it somatic experiencing or sensory motor therapy. I mean it doesn’t matter what we call it. I think we are going to see a lot more of this starting to come up.

Alisa shared her observations regarding how the field of therapy had already begun to integrate more body-oriented therapies, like trauma-sensitive yoga. Although these approaches are called by many names, she felt that they all integrate mind-body awareness and body-oriented approaches in therapy. Alisa referred to this as the new wave of therapy, "the fourth or fifth wave of therapy.” Alisa felt that the field of counselling, psychotherapy and mental health would continue to bring in more holistic mind-body approaches to mental health care.

This major theme covers participants’ thoughts on possible future directions for yoga in counselling and psychotherapy and the general field of mental health. Joseph believed yoga could be a powerful tool for transformation and change and he envisioned psychiatry and the mental health field at large integrating more yoga into their systems. Meera spoke about a shift that she had seen in terms of people accepting and being more open to the practice of yoga in counselling and psychotherapy. Participants concluded that there was a rich future for the integration of yoga and therapy and that they were hopeful regarding yoga making its way into the larger field of mental health care. According to Alisa, body-oriented therapies like yoga were the next major wave in therapy.

In this final core theme, the challenges of integration and future directions, participants described the struggles and challenges that they encountered in integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy, and their perspectives regarding the future of yoga in therapy practice. The first major theme, the challenges of integration, included participant’s reflections on their experiences with the ethics of counselling and psychotherapy practice, such as the rules and regulations of mental health practices creating uncertainty and challenges in terms of what they
were allowed to do in counselling and psychotherapy practice. For many participants, they were cautious and careful in terms of how they brought the practice of yoga into session, such as avoiding touch and yoga postural adjustments in order to comply with the rules of the governing body or college that they belonged to. The last major theme, *future directions*, included reflections on participants’ beliefs about the future of counselling, psychotherapy, and the larger mental health field looking promising in integrating yoga and more body-oriented approaches.
CHAPTER 5
Discussion

The integration of yoga into counselling and psychotherapy is a new and emerging area of practice. Currently, there is a paucity of research examining the processes involved in integrating yoga into therapy practice. Therefore, counsellors and psychotherapists have little direction in understanding the path and practices involved in safely and successfully integrating yoga into their therapy practices. The main research question of this study: *What are the processes of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy*, was investigated through participant interviews. This research study involved interviewing ten Canadian counsellors and psychotherapists who identified as integrating yoga into their counselling and psychotherapy practices. Participants’ description of the multifaceted processes of integration, along with using grounded theory methods, led to the identification of three core themes in the process of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy, which are: (a) the therapists’ preparation for integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy; (b) therapists preparing clients to practice yoga in therapy sessions; and (c) the practice of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. The results of this investigation suggest that integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy can be understood as processes that involve many phases and aspects, and each process builds upon the next, providing therapists with certain fundamental skills, understanding, and experiences to successfully bring yoga into their therapy practice.

The therapists’ process of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy begins by their personal preparation for the practice of integration. This personal preparation includes the ways in which they learn about yoga and experience yoga for themselves. This can take the form of having a personal yoga routine and also acquiring formal yoga education and training. This
task of therapists preparing themselves for integration speaks to the importance of embodying the art and practice of yoga as a way to better understand integration and successfully integrate yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. By having a personal yoga routine and learning about yoga formally, this process allows the therapist to more intimately understand yoga, such as how yoga works, the mechanisms of the yoga practices, the challenges of yoga practices, and to better prepare themselves for bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy practice. A study by Park, Riley, Bedesin, and Michelle (2016) found that when practitioners have a regular yoga practice over a long period of time, they develop a more in-depth understanding of yoga, specifically the mind-body-spirit nature of yoga (Park et al., 2016). For these reasons, Kamradt (2017) has also emphasized that for psychotherapists who will be providing yoga to their clients, it is essential for these therapists to have sufficient competence in the area of yoga.

Following this phase of integration, counsellors and psychotherapists continue their process of integration by preparing their clients to practice yoga in therapy sessions. Therapists prepare their clients to practice yoga in counselling and psychotherapy by undergoing the following initial steps: Having conversations with clients to assess their readiness, openness, and perceptions of practicing yoga in therapy, providing psychoeducation on yoga for mental health, developing the therapeutic relationship, and orienting clients to their body. This general theme of preparing clients for yoga serves many important purposes. According to Kamradt (2017), preparing clients for an integrative yoga and psychotherapy practice, through initial dialogues, obtaining client consent, and providing psychoeducation about the integrative practice, can provide the clients with a sense of safety, trust, and rapport with the therapist. Preparing clients for integration can ensure that the client enters their yoga practices with certain fundamental skills, and mental and emotional preparation, all which will lead to the client practicing yoga with greater confidence, motivation, safety, trust, and success. This is especially important for clients
who are new to yoga, since they may have fears and hesitation around practicing yoga. For example, they may experience insecurities around body image, feel intimidated by what they have observed about the practice of yoga so far (e.g., complex yoga postures in yoga classes), or lack motivation to practice yoga on their own due to depression and other mental health challenges. Eggleston and Firebaugh (2018) looked at the experiences that yoga practitioners have with their yoga practices and found that many practitioners reported feeling anxious and insecure about attending yoga classes and “had concerns with their appearance/body image and/or skills related to practicing specific yoga poses” (p. 3). Furthermore, psychological obstacles to practicing yoga may be on the rise since the yoga culture that is being popularized in today's society emphasizes glamour, flexibility, an ideal body image, and a certain way that a yoga practitioner is supposed to look. Therapists preparing clients to practice yoga in session can therefore play an important role in helping clients to overcome the initial psychological obstacles to practicing yoga in session and also correct any misperception of yoga that have arisen from the ways in which Western society popularizes yoga.

The practice of bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy marks the next phase in the process of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. This involves the therapist integrating three major aspects of yoga into counselling and psychotherapy sessions, which include yoga models, yoga techniques, and yoga philosophy. This phase of integration reveals how the actual practice of yoga is done in therapy practice and the key aspects of yoga that are found to be most suitable for clients with mental health vulnerabilities. Each of these three aspects of yoga integrated into therapy serve clients in some way and enhance the practice of counselling and psychotherapy. For example, integrating yoga models and theories in counselling and psychotherapy provides therapists with a holistic understanding of the client’s issues from the mind, body, energetic, and spiritual perspectives and can address the client’s needs from a
Integrating yoga practices and techniques into therapy gives clients concrete tools and techniques to practice in counselling and psychotherapy, as well as on their own at home, and leads to several therapeutic benefits. Stephens (2019) reported in her research that various yoga techniques such as pranayama, yoga postural practice, and meditation are therapeutic since they can evoke calm and grounding, relax the nervous system, and reduce anxiety, stress, depression, and other mental health issues. Bringing yoga philosophy into therapy sessions goes hand in hand with yoga practices and techniques, as these teachings are the fundamental ethical principles that serve to support the practice of yoga. According to Sullivan et al. (2018), practicing yoga philosophies in therapeutic settings for clients is an “ethical intention setting” process that can lead to the development of positive qualities, such as greater resilience, improved cognitive states, “introception,” and “promote positive physiological and affective states and prosocial behavioural responses” (p. 12). Sullivan et al. (2018) indicated that yoga philosophy supports clients in creating goals that are aligned with the philosophy of yoga, which is based on living with integrity, harmony, and non-violence toward the self and others. This supports clients in cultivating positive mental and emotional states, and in improving behavioral functioning.

A greater elaboration on each of these major themes, plus a critique on some of the challenges and limitations of the current study’s findings is provided in the following discussion. A midlevel theory is offered at the end of the discussion and presents how the core themes, major themes, and subthemes interact with and relate to one another. This model is a comprehensive framework and answers the major research question: What are the processes of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy?
5.1 Therapists’ Preparation for Integrating Yoga Into Counselling and Psychotherapy

Based on the findings of this study, therapists’ personal preparation for integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy involves the ways in which they learn about yoga and experience yoga for themselves. Personal preparation includes therapists having a personal yoga routine, such as attending yoga classes and practicing yoga on their own, and undergoing formal yoga education and training, such as a yoga teacher training certification or other related yoga training and educational opportunities. By having a personal yoga routine and pursuing formal yoga training and education, this allows therapists to intimately understand yoga, such as how yoga works and the experiences and challenges that their clients might encounter while practicing yoga in therapy. Similarly, a study by Park et al. (2016) found that when yoga practitioners have a dedicated long-term yoga practice, they discover aspects of their yoga practice that they may have not experienced in the beginning of their yoga practice. Practitioners reported that their initial experiences with yoga provided physical fitness and stress relief; however, practicing yoga over time also led to experiencing several psychological and spiritual benefits (Park et al., 2016). When therapists have a dedicated long-term yoga practice, they can experience yoga more intimately and understand its multifaceted mind, body, and spirit benefits.

Discovering the deeper aspects of yoga as a result of continued yoga practice is also mentioned in the ancient yogic literature, Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 2001). According to Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras, in order to achieve higher states of yoga, such as inner peace, a stronger mind-body-spirit connection, an expanded sense of spirituality, and advanced states of meditation, practitioners require a long-term dedicated yoga practice, where yoga has become part of their lifestyle (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 2001). Participants of the current research study stated that over time their yoga practices had led to healing physical injuries, reducing mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, and developing positive
qualities such as self-compassion, presence, and embodiment. These results indicate that when therapists have a committed and regular yoga practice, over time their yoga practice begins to lead to several therapeutic benefits, such as mental, emotional, and physical healing, and well-being. Previous research by Kishida, Mama, Larkley, and Elavasky (2018) found similar results in yoga practitioners that had a dedicated yoga practice over a long period of time. Their results indicate that practicing yoga over time leads to developing positive psychological traits in its practitioners, such as mindfulness, self-compassion, greater self-awareness, connectedness to self and others, greater quality life, calmness, and trust. Simionato and Simpson (2018) explained that the practice of psychotherapy is highly demanding psychologically and emotionally, and therefore psychotherapists may face burnout and stress, which can adversely affect their clients’ therapeutic progress. Therefore, when therapists commit to having yoga as a part of their lifestyle, yoga can serve as a protective factor against burnout and other emotional challenges that come with the practice of counselling and psychotherapy. Furthermore, the positive traits that therapists develop from practicing yoga, such as mindfulness, presence, calmness, and overall well-being, can positively impact how therapists are able to provide therapeutic support for their clients, such as being more empathically attuned, present, compassionate, and accepting toward the client’s difficult experiences.

When therapists practice yoga for themselves, this can also positively influence how therapists are able to deliver yoga to their clients, specifically teaching clients yoga with greater understanding, depth, and personal experience. Kamradt (2017) wrote that for psychotherapists who will be providing yoga to their clients, it is essential that these therapists undergo personal yoga practice and training. Having this personal experience with yoga can provide the therapist with sufficient competence in the area of yoga and gives the therapist the skills needed to provide yoga to clients in counselling and psychotherapy. If therapists do not gain enough personal
experience with yoga, they may be putting their clients at risk because they may lack the competency in understanding the risks and challenges that clients could encounter in their yoga practices. Forbes et al. (2011) described the tendency of the field of psychotherapy to use a “learn a tool today, use it tomorrow” approach (p. 8). She states that this tendency of therapists to not fully experience and cultivate the yoga practices that they are providing their clients can put their clients at risk, since the therapist may not fully have grasped the practices of yoga and understood the risks, challenges, and contraindications.

Formal yoga education and training seems to be essential for therapists who want to integrate yoga into counselling and psychotherapy, as was reported in the results of this study. The yoga education and training that therapists pursue can fall under two major streams: (a) learning about the foundations of yoga (first yoga education and training stream) and (b) learning about the therapeutic applications of yoga for mental health (second yoga education and training stream).

This first stream of yoga education and training teaches therapists about the foundations of yoga, such as yoga techniques and practices, yoga postures, breathing practices and meditation, yoga history, yoga theory, yogic philosophy, and how to conduct a yoga class and teach others yoga. This can include taking a certified yoga teacher training program, attending yoga classes and workshops, reading books, and acquiring other educational opportunities, as suggested by participants of this study. The second stream of yoga education and training focuses on the therapeutic applications of yoga for mental health and teaches therapists about the therapeutic side of yoga, such as what practices are suitable for various mental health challenges, how to modify yoga practice to meet the needs of clients with trauma, understanding the integration of yoga within the mental health field, and also learning about how yoga impacts the body and mind for people experiencing trauma, depression, anxiety, stress, and other mental
health issues. This second yoga educational and training stream can take the form of undergoing a certified yoga therapist training program or attending conferences, workshops, classes, or accessing other educational materials related the therapeutic applications of yoga for mental health. Each yoga education and training stream provides the therapist with a unique set of skills and understanding of yoga, and undergoing both educational streams provides the therapist with a more comprehensive skill set to successfully integrate yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. For example, a certified yoga teacher training program, which is part of the first stream of yoga education and training, provides the practitioner with an overview of the basic yoga postures and techniques, sequences, adjustment, and alignment, which are a fundamental part of every yoga practice. Therapists can then build upon these foundations to grasp the more advanced-level concepts and practices of yoga for complex mental health issues. Forbes et al. (2011) wrote, “In order to successfully integrate the body into psychotherapy, mental health therapists need extensive, formalized yoga training. To do therapeutic work involving yoga requires, at the very least a solid background in asana, alignment, and sequencing” (p. 8). This extensive formalized yoga training, according to Forbes et al. (2011), would provide the therapist with a solid background in yoga and lead to success in bringing yoga into psychotherapy. Similarly, pursuing the second stream of yoga education and training (yoga therapy for mental health) can give the therapist more focused training on the therapeutic applications of yoga, which goes beyond the scope and training of the first stream of yoga education and training. Stephens (2019) confirmed the importance of therapists pursuing both yoga education and training streams and how a lack of training in the second stream, yoga therapy training, can result in the therapist lacking competence to address complex mental health issues of their clients. This researcher stated that “conventional yoga teachers training does not prepare the yoga teacher for patients with specific challenges or medical complexities”, and explained that for mental health professionals to be
adequately prepared to provide therapeutic yoga to clients, they require some form of “special yoga therapy training” that is “individualized and prescribed for the patient’s particular needs” (Stephens, 2016, p. 64). Stephens (2016) further wrote that for therapists who are interested in bringing yoga to their clinical practice, more specialized training in yoga therapy is required because this training includes a specialized focus on individualizing the yoga practice, in a prescriptive manner, to address their clients’ unique mental health needs.

Overall, formalized yoga training, which includes both the foundations of yoga and yoga therapy related training, can provide the technical information and theory to validate, support, and ground therapists’ personal experiences with yoga, plus provide the appropriate language, theory, and understanding of yoga and its therapeutic applications, in order to safely and effectively deliver yoga to clients.

As part of the ethical practice of psychotherapy, the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario (2016) explains that psychotherapists should undergo the required practice, training, and education to develop competence in the particular area of their therapeutic practices (section 2.1). The consequences of therapists not achieving this level of expertise and training in yoga is the lack of skill, ability, and understanding in providing yoga practices to clients experiencing complex mental health issues. According to Weintraub (2013), without such training the therapist could have an inadequate understanding of the contraindications of yoga and the safety issues involved with various yogic practices, which could put their clients at risk. Weintraub (2013) says that, “psychotherapists who have not completed a yoga teacher training should not be teaching asana or kriya breathing that may have strong effects and numerous contraindications” (p. 17). This author emphasizes the need for therapists to acquire formal yoga education and training, in the form of a yoga teacher training, in order to gain an understanding of the safety and contraindications of yoga practices. Cultivating a true understanding of yoga
requires the study of yoga and its practices. Researcher Orr (2014) explains how the Western forms of yoga have left out some of the essential components of yoga, such as meditative practices, as was taught in yogic scriptures. The forms of yoga in the Western world are commoditized and focus heavily on physical fitness. Orr (2014) states that,

With its focus on asana practice, which is barely mentioned in Patanjali’s classic text, Yoga-Sutra…this vital and complex system of holistic human development has been commoditized and thereby reduced to little more than a physical exercise routine (p. 42).

Orr (2014) shares that the Western forms of yoga overemphasize yoga asana and treat yoga like “a physical exercise routine” (p. 42). The true practice of yoga, according to Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras, incorporates elements of ethics, breathing practices and various meditation practices, and little emphasis is given to yoga asana. Therefore, it is essential that therapists who are interested to bring yoga into their therapy practices begin by studying yoga in depth in order to understand its true practices and tradition. Otherwise, therapists risk teaching yoga as another form of physical exercise routine for clients. Yoga education and training, and a personal practice of yoga, can provide the therapist with foundations and skills needed to understand yoga in depth and successfully integrate it into counselling and psychotherapy practice.

Another important factor for therapists pursuing formal yoga education and training is that it can give therapists some form of yoga certification or designation, such as a yoga teacher or a yoga therapist, which can be helpful for therapists to have in order to gain credibility in teaching yoga in counselling and psychotherapy practice.

According to the results of this study, the therapist’s path to integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy involves a variety of yoga training and educational opportunities. There is no one specific path that leads to effectively integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy practice. This was indicated when some research participants explained that they
had pursued certified yoga therapy training, while other participants stated that they did not have certified yoga training, and instead learned about yoga through other training methods such as attending training courses, conferences, classes, reading books, and developing a personal yoga practice. These methods taught them about the foundations of yoga and its therapeutic applications for mental health. Based on these results, there is no one formula for yoga education and training that therapists need to undergo in order to successfully integrate yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. Instead a therapist’s success of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy could involve experiencing a variety of yoga educational and training opportunities.

The current research findings differ from what has been expressed in other research about the therapist’s preparation for integrating yoga into therapy, which takes a much more prescriptive stance. For example, Stephens (2019) mentions that it is important for mental health and medical health professionals who bring yoga to their clients to obtain formal training through both a certified yoga teacher training program and a medical/therapeutic yoga training program. The author suggests that therapists need formal, certified yoga teacher training and certified yoga therapy training in order to safety and effectively deliver therapeutic yoga to their clients. Also, Weintraub (2013) said that “psychotherapists who have not completed a yoga teacher training should not be teaching asana or kriya breathing that may have strong effects and numerous contraindications” (p. 17). Weintraub (2013) believes that it is through certified yoga teacher training that therapists can learn about the safety and contraindications of yoga practices and therefore safely and effectively provide yoga to their clients. Yet, according the current research findings of this study, not all participants had received training through a certified yoga teacher training program or a program that certified yoga therapists. These participants had felt, however, that they had still developed the skills, understanding, and competencies to provide yoga to their
clients in a safe and effective manner. What prepares therapists to successfully integrate yoga into counselling and psychotherapy, according to the current research findings, is their ongoing involvement in learning about yoga, which they can do by attending regular yoga workshops, conferences, classes, training programs, and other educational opportunities, as well as having their own dedicated personal practice of yoga. This point was indicated when research participants of the study shared that they had been practicing and studying yoga for over 15 years and through years of personal experience with yoga had begun to understand the intricacies and mechanisms of yoga practices. Therefore, a therapist’s preparation for integration may be more fluid than what has been suggested by previous research literature. The preparation for integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy goes beyond acquiring some form of formalized yoga training: it involves the therapist having a lifestyle that incorporates the practice, philosophy, and study of yoga. It is yoga ‘off the mat’ and integrated into one’s daily life. Having a list of yoga certifications may not give the practitioner the true essence of yoga. For example, many of the yoga certifications programs in North America are Western forms of yoga that omit the deeper spiritual, esoteric, and essential teachings of yoga (Ivtzan & Jegatheeswaran, 2014). Understanding yoga may happen through years of practicing and embodying yoga (Ivtzan & Jegatheeswaran, 2014). According to the results of the current study, this deeper relationship with yoga, where yoga becomes an intimate part of one’s lifestyle and where one is committed to the personal study of yogic teachings, is as important as formal yoga education and training, if not more, in preparing the therapist for integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy.
5.2 The Therapist Preparing Clients to Practice Yoga in Therapy Sessions

The therapist preparing clients to practice yoga is the second core theme in the process of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. Preparing clients for the integration of yoga has four phases, as indicated by participants of the study. They are (a) having conversations with clients to determine their readiness and openness to practice yoga in therapy; (b) providing clients with psychoeducation on yoga for mental health; (c) developing the therapeutic relationship; and (d) orienting clients to their body.

The core theme of preparing clients to practice yoga serves many important purposes. First, it can ensure that clients enter their yoga practice with the greater mental, emotional, and physical preparedness, which is important because it allows the client to practice yoga with greater trust, confidence, motivation, and a sense of safety. According to Duros and Crowley (2014), creating a stable therapeutic environment for the client is an essential step in the therapy process before therapists integrate holistic and mind-body-based interventions into session. Creating a stable therapeutic environment occurs when therapists take the time to assess the client’s feelings and opinions regarding practicing the mind-body-based intervention, and providing psychoeducation on the treatment modality. Doing so gives the client a sense of transparency regarding what to expect in the mind-body intervention plan and establishes greater connectedness and trust with the therapist (Duros & Crowley, 2014). Duros and Crowley (2014) explain that creating a stable therapeutic environment also creates a sense of collaboration with the client and gives the client a sense of safety, trust, support, and preparedness for practicing the mind-body intervention with greater ease and success. This process of therapists preparing their clients for practicing yoga involves therapists having conversations with clients in order to determine their readiness and openness to do yoga in session. This process gives the client a voice to express their needs and opinions regarding practicing yoga, and also involves the client
in partaking in the decision-making process regarding practicing integration in counselling and psychotherapy. Kamradt (2017) believes that in order for yoga to be ethically integrated into counselling and psychotherapy, therapists must ensure that they are having conversations with the client before the onset of integration, where they provide the client with information on yoga and therapy and obtain consent from the client to practice yoga in session. Kamradt (2017) wrote, “They [therapists] must appropriately set up their practice to include providing sufficient information to their client at the outset of the professional relationship. This will enable the client to decide whether or not to participate in this treatment. This informed consent process applies both to the yoga end of their practice as well as the general therapy side (p. 29).

Kamradt (2017) explains that by providing clients with information regarding the practice of yoga in psychotherapy, and by giving clients the opportunity to decide if they want to participate in this treatment approach, clients may then feel safe, secure, understood, supported, and trusting toward the therapist and the treatment approach. This can be empowering for clients because their needs, opinions, comfort level, and final decision to practice yoga are being honored and considered by the therapist. Also, Duros and Crowley (2014) wrote that the best practices in psychotherapy occur when therapists “honour the spectrum of experiences, needs and comfort level of the client” (p. 241), with respect to the mind-body interventions being introduced. Having these initial conversations with clients is important because without fostering feelings of support, collaboration, and respect for the client’s needs and opinions, a lack of collaboration, poor treatment outcomes and possibly premature termination of therapy by the client can occur. As a critical part of the ethical practice of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy, which was emphasized by participants of this study, when counsellors and psychotherapists take the time to thoroughly assesses the client’s perceptions and readiness to
practice yoga, plus obtain the client’s consent to practice integration, the establishment of a stable therapeutic environment occurs, which is a central part of developing safety, trust, security, and preparation for the client to practice yoga in therapy.

The next process in preparing clients for practicing yoga in counselling and psychotherapy is providing them with psychoeducation on yoga for mental health. Since yoga in counselling and psychotherapy is a new field, there are still many unknowns about the integration process for clients. According to the results of this study, when therapists provide clients with psychoeducation on yoga for mental health, specifically on how yoga impacts the mind and body, how the integration process works in therapy, and other important background information on yoga, it can help clients release fears, nervousness, and hesitation regarding the unknowns of practicing yoga in therapy. Providing clients with psychoeducation on yoga can foster an understanding about why practicing yoga could be beneficial for clients and how it will impact them personally, thus increasing motivation and a sense of relevancy to practice yoga. It can also clear any misconceptions and misunderstandings about yoga.

Providing clients with psychoeducation on yoga for mental health can also help clients to clear other possible initial obstacles to practicing yoga. According to research by Smith and Atencio (2017), many new practitioners of yoga encounter several psychological obstacles toward practicing yoga. The reasons have to do with the culture of yoga in today's society, which popularizes certain images about how a yoga practitioner is supposed to look and be, which does not often fit the true essence of traditional yoga. Clients can take on certain pressures regarding how they are supposed to look in order to do yoga. They may also have other misperceptions from what they have heard about yoga from social media. When therapists provide clients with psychoeducation on yoga, this can help clients better understand the true practice of yoga, correct misperceptions of yoga, and help them feel more adequately prepared, safe, and comfortable to
practice yoga in session. Also, Kamradt (2017) explains that psychotherapists who are interested in integrating yoga in psychotherapy should provide psychoeducation and be clear about the goals, rationale, and safety plan for this intervention. According to Kamradt (2017), “specifically, it will be important to include the risk and benefits of yoga, and also the nature of therapy, potentially integrating the theoretical orientation of the psychotherapist and how this orientation might connect with yogic philosophy” (p. 29). Kamradt (2017) emphasizes the importance of the psychotherapist providing enough background information on the practice of yoga in psychotherapy, such as therapists discussing their theoretical orientation as it relates to yoga philosophy, because it allows clients to be well-informed about the treatment modalities and can help build the client-therapist rapport. When therapists integrate psychoeducation on yoga, it becomes a critical part of preparing clients to understand and be well-informed about the process and practice of yoga in therapy. When clients understand how yoga can impact their own mental health, they may experience a greater sense of relevancy regarding why they are practicing yoga in session.

The therapist developing a therapeutic relationship with their clients is the third process in preparing clients to practice yoga in counselling and psychotherapy and was discussed by participants of this study as a significant part of providing clients with a sense of support, emotional bonding, safety, and trust in the therapist and the therapeutic process. When clients have developed emotional bonding and trust in their therapist, this can help clients overcome obstacles to practicing yoga in session. The obstacles that clients experience when practicing yoga, according to participants of the study, included: insecurities and anxiety about not being able to perform yoga practices properly, self-doubts due to body-image issues, lack of motivation to practice yoga due to depression and other mental health challenges, and fears of practicing yoga due to previous negative experiences with yoga. According to participants of this research
study, developing the therapeutic relationship with clients can provide them with the internal strength to overcome these initial obstacles to practicing yoga. Eggleston and Firebaugh (2018) in their research exploring practitioners’ experiences with yoga practices found that many practitioners reported feeling anxious and insecure about attending yoga classes and “had concerns with their appearance/body image and/or skills related to practicing specific yoga poses” (p. 3). These perceived barriers to practicing yoga, if not addressed by the therapist, could deter clients from practicing yoga in therapy session, or lead to approaching yoga with fears, anxieties, and insecurities, all of which could interfere with the client experiencing the full therapeutic benefits of yoga in therapy. This is especially true for clients who have gone through trauma and the body has become an unsafe place for them. As mentioned by some participants of this study, for client who have been avoiding connecting to their body due to trauma, and are highly dissociative, the idea of practicing yoga and having to engage the body may trigger old fears, traumas, and anxieties. Therefore, when therapists have developed a therapeutic relationship with their clients this can provide the client with a sense of safety, trust, support, and connection to help them overcome barriers to practicing yoga.

Without adequately developing the therapeutic relationship, clients may feel distant from the therapist and feel unsafe and insecure toward practicing yoga in session. This can impact the progress and effectiveness of therapy, such as poor therapeutic outcomes and early termination by the client. The importance of the therapeutic relationship in supporting the client’s success in psychotherapy was also reported by researchers Modic and Zvele (2015). These researchers interviewed clients to explore what their perspectives were regarding the most helpful elements in their psychotherapy sessions. The qualitative interviews of these clients suggested that it was the therapeutic relationship, specifically therapists’ empathic attunement and acceptance of clients that clients identified as being the most helpful elements in the success of their psychotherapy,
more so than any specific interventions. Modic and Zvelc (2015) explained that these factors, which are part of the therapeutic relationship, provide clients with a sense of trust, safety, and feelings of connectedness to the therapist and impact clients’ success and engagement in psychotherapy and therapeutic interventions.

Building a relationship based on emotional connection, trust, safety, and respect was also part of the ancient tradition of yoga. The elements of trust, support, and connection between the student and yoga teacher was a central part of the traditional practice of yoga, and this trust and relationship between student and teacher was considered very sacred. Lucia (2018) explains that this traditional teacher-student connection was considered sacred because it was through the relationship that the teacher was able to transmit the holy knowledge and practice of yoga to the student in a process called saktipat. In this way, the student would look to the teacher with reverence and respect. Such a relationship was called the guru-disciple relationship (Bogart, 1992). However, in more current times and in the context of the therapist and client relationship, there are major differences in how this relationship is expressed. In the ancient yogic tradition, the teacher-student relationship involved more hierarchy, where the teacher was seen as holding greater power, authority, and wisdom over the student. Lucia (2018) said that “devotees who elevate the guru do so because they believe that the guru is energetically powerful and is a conduit for divine power” (p. 958). In the context of counselling and psychotherapy, there is less hierarchy and the therapist encourages the client’s sense of independence and equality.

Duros and Crowley (2014) highlighted the importance of providing clients with a sense of equality and empowerment in the process of bringing yoga into psychotherapy: The therapist includes the client in the decision-making process of practicing yoga and honors the client’s needs, concerns, and opinions regarding how yoga should be practiced in session. In the context of counselling and psychotherapy, the therapist looks to empower the client to be his or her own
teacher, whereas in ancient yogic tradition, the guru was often treated as superior to the student. This point was emphasized by participants of this study when they mentioned that they would always follow the client’s needs and wishes in their process of determining if yoga would be brought into session. Participants expressed that they would never push yoga onto their clients if their clients were not ready.

The more ancient and traditional approach of the teacher-student relationship has been subjected to major criticism over the past several decades due the many occurrences of power abuse from the teacher. Lucia (2018) discussed how many students of major gurus and yoga teachers had been coming forward to share their story of being exploited by their teachers. She wrote that “modern global Hinduism, guru sex scandals have become so ubiquitous that they have become the foremost representation of the guru, certainly in the popular media” (p. 974). The nature of the guru-disciple relationship, which is hierarchal in nature, can often lead to the student giving away their power to the teacher and thus becoming subjected to possible exploitation. Therapists can minimize the potential for power abuse that occurs when they are in the position of teaching clients yoga by including clients in the decision-making process for practicing yoga, obtaining consent from the client, offering them many choices as to how they would like to practice yoga, and also honoring the needs, comfort, and safety of their clients during the practice of yoga. Doing so can minimize the hierarchal nature that can often arise when the therapists are in the position of teaching yoga to their clients, and prevent therapists from falling into the guru-student power imbalance that is widespread in yoga culture.

Orienting clients to their body is the next major task for therapists in preparing clients to practice yoga in therapy. Orienting clients to their body was mentioned by participants of this study and involved therapists directing clients to pay attention to the sensations and feelings within the body in order to cultivate self-awareness and mindfulness. Some of the ways in which
therapists can help clients orient toward their body includes the therapist asking clients to notice how their body feels as they are sharing their stories, directing clients to notice the breath as they are talking about a distressing situation, or tracking clients’ physiological responses and sharing their observations with clients. Being aware of the body’s sensations and cultivating mindfulness and self-awareness are the foundations for any successful yoga practice, as these skills allow clients to slow down to listen to their body’s needs and responses, develop a deeper relationship to their body, and gain valuable insights about themselves (Cox, Ullrich-French, Cole, & D’Hondt-Taylor, 2016). Research by Cox et al. (2016) found that the more mindful and self-aware practitioners were during their yoga practice, the greater the benefits they derived from their yoga practice. Specifically, Cox et al. (2016) found that self-awareness and mindfulness during yoga practices led to decreases in self-objectification, such as holding shame and negative thoughts about oneself and one’s body, and to increases in their positive physical self-concept. Cox et al. (2016) explained that when practitioners brought greater mindfulness and self-awareness into their yoga practice, it could lead to the state of witnessing thoughts and feelings, learning to accept what is, and cultivating a more open and non-judgmental mindset, all which can have positive effects on one’s mind, body, and emotions. As was indicated by the results of this study, the numerous benefits that are derived from practicing yoga with mindfulness, self-awareness, and body connection were one of the many reasons why participants of this study began orienting clients toward the body and teaching them mindfulness and self-awareness at the onset of therapy.

Many clients may have spent years numbing and dissociating from the body due to trauma. The body may be an unsafe place for them and also unfamiliar territory, and therefore becoming aware of the body can bring up deep-rooted fears, anxieties and traumas. For these clients, before they can practice yoga, further preparation, which involves orienting clients
toward the body and developing bodily-awareness, might be the first necessary step. Otherwise, these clients might still be in a state of dissociation when practicing yoga, not being fully present with their yoga practices, which can lead to incorrectly practicing yoga, becoming injured, and not fully experiencing the therapeutic benefits of yoga. Participants of this study spoke about how practicing yoga with mindfulness and self-awareness was what differentiated yoga practices from other forms of exercise. Also, Wiese, Keil Rasmussen, and Olesen (2018) found in their research that many yoga injuries are caused by practitioners not being aware or mindful of how their body was responding during yoga practices. Overstretching, strains, or sprains are the consequences of practicing yoga without being connected to oneself and one’s body. Over-doing the yoga posture due to a hyper focus on performance and perfectionism can also lead to the client losing awareness of their body’s limitations and thus comprise the safety of their practice. Therefore, when counsellors and psychotherapists help clients practice self-awareness, mindfulness, and body connection early on in therapy, it can provide the client with a preparedness to practice yoga with greater mindfulness and self-connection and thereby minimize yoga injury, practicing while in a state of dissociation, or practicing yoga the same way as practicing another form of exercise.

5.3 The Practice of Integrating Yoga Into Counselling and Psychotherapy

The practice of bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy is the final phase in the therapist’s process of integration. This phase reveals how the practice of yoga is done in therapy and highlights the key aspects, teachings, and techniques of yoga that are most suitable for bringing it into counselling and psychotherapy. As mentioned by participants of this study, there are three major aspects of yoga that therapists integrate into counselling and psychotherapy: yoga theories, yoga practices, and yoga philosophies. Each of these three aspects of yoga play a critical
role in the practice of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy and serve the client in healing with yoga.

Integrating yoga theories into counselling and psychotherapy involves the therapist drawing upon yogic theories that provide a holistic framework to understand the mental health of clients from a yogic perspective. According to the results of this study, three major yoga theories—the chakra theory, the pancha kosha theory, and the triguna theory—are the common theories that therapists bring into therapy sessions to help them understand clients on the level of the mind, body and energy, and the spiritual dimensions. These yoga theories are not yoga practices given to clients but rather ways in which therapists understand clients’ mental health issues from a yogic lens. For example, when therapists bring the chakra theory into counselling and psychotherapy, it helps therapists understand the energetic and physical counterparts of their clients’ psychological and emotional issues. Judith (2004) explained in her book *Eastern Body Western Mind: Psychology and the Chakra System as a Path to the Self* that the chakras are represented as wheels or disks of complex, spinning, subtle energies that are found throughout the subtle human energetic anatomy and which link to the physical psychological, emotional, and spiritual functioning of a person. Some participants of this study mentioned that the chakra theory guided their psychological inquiry, specifically, therapists could address their clients’ psychological and emotional issues by linking them to various imbalances in the chakras. Judith (2004) explains how the chakra system can be used as a tool for diagnosis and healing. She stated that “the beauty of the chakra system lies in its multidimensionality. These imbalances can be approached verbally through discussion, physically through work with the body and movement, spiritually through meditation, emotionally through exploration of feelings” (p. 21). This author explains that there are many ways in which therapists can bring balance and healing to the chakras, such as through talking, exploring feelings, meditation, and physical movements. Thus,
the benefits of working with the chakras in therapy is that it addresses clients’ healing on a multidimensional level.

The pancha kosha theory is the second major yogic theory that therapists can integrate into counselling and psychotherapy, and was mentioned by some participants of the study as a model that they used to understand and address their clients mental health from a yogic and holistic perspective. According to the pancha kosha theory, each human being is comprised of five layers. Satpathy (2018) drew upon ancient yogic literature to provide an outline of each of these layers. The first layer of the pancha kosha theory is called the annamaya kosha and is linked to the physical body (Satpathy, 2018). Satpathy (2018) describes that the second layer, the pranamaya kosha, is connected to the energetic layer of a person. The third layer, the monamaya kosha, is linked to the mind (including memories and emotions). The fourth layer, the vigyanama kosha, is connected to the higher mind or wisdom, and the final layer, the anandamaya kosha, is the layer where a person is closest to their true self or divine essence (Satpathy, 2018). The pancha kosha theory says that if there is imbalance or disharmony in any one of these layers, it will lead to a person’s experiencing impaired functioning on the level of thoughts, emotions, vital energies, and/or the physical body (Satpathy, 2018). The usefulness of the pancha kosha theory in therapy is that it offers therapists a framework to understand how their clients’ issues are represented in these five different layers of functioning – the physical, energetic, lower mind, higher mind, and spiritual domains. This sets the stage for therapists to then bring in those yogic and psychological interventions and techniques that address clients’ issues holistically. If therapists cannot understand how their clients’ mental health challenges are represented holistically, then they may not be truly capturing the essence of the yoga approach in psychotherapy and counselling, which is to address the mind, body, and spirit connection. The pancha kosha theory addresses the limitations of Western counselling and psychotherapy, which
creates demarcations between the mind, body and spirit. Satpathy (2018) wrote that the pancha kosha theory is a suitable yogic model that can be beneficial to aspects of Western culture, such as mental health, because it offers an Eastern perspective on human personality and functioning. Satpathy (2018) explained that when mental health professionals integrate pancha kosha theory into therapy and Western models of health care, they are part of developing indigenous psychologies based on Eastern perspectives. Creating indigenous psychologies in mental health care, such as in counselling and psychotherapy, is important because it caters to those clients who prescribe to holistic and yogic worldviews, practices, and beliefs, and broadens the practice of Western psychotherapy to include more mind-body-spirit based interventions.

The third major yogic theory that counsellors and psychotherapists in this study brought into therapy is the triguna theory. The triguna theory indicates how a person is operating from a primary energetic state. It posits that there are three main energy states that a person can be in: tamas guna, the energetic state of inertia and stagnation; raja guna, the energetic state of movement and restlessness; and sattva guna, the energetic state of balance and harmony. When therapists bring the triguna theory into session, they can understand how the client’s mental health issues are linked to their primary energetic state. Participants of this study explained that issues such as anxiety, stress, restlessness, and anger are linked to the rajas (chaotic) energy state. Symptoms of depression, heaviness, and stagnation mean clients are in a tamas (inertia) energetic state. Therapists can help clients learn how to cope with these imbalanced energetic states and teach them to bring themselves back to the sattva (balanced) energetic state.

The triguna theory opens the doorway for therapists to help clients understand their mental health from an energetic perspective, and for some clients this deeper energetic understanding of their mental health can fit their existing worldviews and beliefs about the role of energy in cultivating health and well-being. In many cultures energy is understood as the primary
factor in how physical life expresses itself. For example, in the tradition of yoga, all of life is seen as an expression of energy, and based on the quality and vibration of energy, that life form will either express health, vitality, and its fullest potential, or disease and death (Feuerstein, 2008).

Hart (2012), in her research about energy medicine wrote that increasing vital energy is the root of many other ancient and holistic health practices such as qigong, Ayurveda, and Reiki. The relevancy of addressing the energetic state of a person in order to achieve healing and well-being is found throughout many cultures and traditions of the world. Therefore, when therapists integrate the triguna theory into therapy practice, they are incorporating the energetic aspects of human functioning that is widely supported across many cultures and traditional mind-body practices.

Sullivan et al. (2018) wrote that when yoga therapists bring the triguna theory into their therapy practice and teach clients about understanding their energetic state and how to move toward the sattva state (balanced-energy state), they may find their clients improving in self-regulation, resilience, and relationship with self and others. Sullivan et al. (2018) wrote,

The different proportions of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* in each object of material nature, including the subtle mental components of personality, cognition, emotions and identity, give them their unique attributes…Being established in *sattva guna* enables the opportunity to build positive internal relationships with interoceptive sensations, memories, emotions, thoughts and beliefs which may in turn support positive relationships with others (p. 7, 10).

Sullivan et al. (2018) explains that the proportions of the three gunas, or energy states, effect how the material world, including human personality, functions. When a person is operating from the sattva guna state, this leads to positive development in mental and emotional functioning and relationship with self and others. Therefore the triguna theory can allow
therapists to bring the yogic perspective of energy states into counselling and psychotherapy practice and help clients learn about how their energy states affect mental health functioning. Therapists can support clients in learning about ways to move toward sattva guna and thereby improve mental, emotional, and physical functioning.

Bringing yoga practices and techniques into counselling and psychotherapy is the next major task within the practice of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. The most common aspects of yoga practice and techniques that therapists can integrate into therapy, as mentioned by all participants of this study, are yogic breathing techniques (pranayama), meditation practices, and yoga postural practices (yoga asana). The benefits of integrating yoga practices and techniques into counselling and psychotherapy is that they are an empirically supported and a practical way to assist clients in reducing their mental health issues and learning valuable skills for emotion regulation and coping with life challenges. Research by Sullivan et al. (2018) indicates that various yoga techniques such as pranayama, yoga postural practice, and meditation, are therapeutic because they relax the nervous system, improve the emotional regulation centers in the brain, and reduce anxiety, stress, depression, and other mental health issues. Also, Kinser et al. (2013) examined the self-reports of yoga practitioners and found that many yoga practitioners reported feeling greater self-awareness, connection with self and others, peacefulness, mindfulness throughout the day, and enhanced mood states as a result of practicing yoga. These results indicate that when therapists teach clients yoga practices and techniques, they are helping clients to positively shift their physiological states and thereby improve overall mental health. Forfylow (2011) summarized the potency of yoga and compared it to the effectiveness of conventional medicine. She wrote that overall yoga is found to have a homeostasis response – balancing hormones, neurotransmitters and total functioning of the body—and is “similar to the effects of conventional medicine…[Yoga is] an appropriate non-
pharmacological clinical intervention for treating anxiety and depression” (p. 141). Thus, therapists can help clients create positive changes at the level of the mind and body by teaching them yoga practices and thereby contributing to the clients’ success in counselling and psychotherapy.

The practices and techniques of yoga are vast, and as the yoga scholar Feurstein (2008) mentioned, there exist hundreds of yoga postures, many breathing techniques that range from gentle breathing practices to the most advance practices, and several meditation styles, all found throughout yogic scriptures that span the course of several thousands of years. The important aspect of integrating yoga practices and techniques into counselling and psychotherapy is the therapists’ understanding of what particular yogic practices would be most appropriate for their clients’ mental health needs. Several participants in this study mentioned that certain yogic postural practices were ideal for helping clients with anxiety, because these practices would calm the nervous system, whereas other groups of postural practices were ideal for clients experiencing depression because these practices would release stagnation in the body and mind. These observations made by participants indicates that bringing yoga into therapy practice is an art of application, and unlike yoga classes, which tend to throw at participants a large variety of yoga practices, the integration of yoga into counselling and psychotherapy involves skillfully matching yoga practices with each client’s mental health issues, constitution, and unique needs. What are the dangers of a therapist incorrectly prescribing yoga practices that do not match the needs of clients? Cramer, Krucoff, and Dobos (2013) research study revealed that yoga practitioners would often experience various health risks and physical injuries when they undertook intensive yoga practices that they were not prepared for. Cramer et al. (2013a) reported, “While gentle forms of yoga breathing, such as the relaxed abdominal breath, may be appropriate for beginners, extreme forms that involve holding or forcing the breath are considered an advanced yoga
practice that should not be done by those new to yoga” (p. 7). Cramer et al (2013a) concluded that certain yoga practices require a certain level of preparation of the body and mind, and that practitioners need to be aware of the contraindications of yoga. In relation to counselling and psychotherapy, therapists should be cautious of providing those yoga practices that clients may not be physically, mentally, or emotionally ready for. For example, clients with high blood pressure should avoid certain breathing techniques, clients with physical injuries may need to refrain from certain yoga postures, and clients with various traumas may not be ready to undertake meditation practices such as savasana, which requires them laying down and closing the eyes, as this could trigger feelings of vulnerability and associated traumas. Several participants of this current study mentioned having a level of heightened sensitivity and attunement toward their clients’ physical, mental, and emotional needs with regards to prescribing yoga practices. Similarly, Stephens (2019) discussed the importance of therapists being well trained in yoga therapy in order to safely and effectively provide yoga to their clients. Stephens (2019) warned, “In addition, there may be risks to engaging in yoga as well if not prescribed, and practiced, appropriately for the individual” (p. 64). Some participants of the current study shared parallel perspectives and mentioned that many clients with certain personality disorders have frail ego structures, and therefore working with deeper and advanced meditation practices, which aim to break down the ego structure, could be hazardous and dangerous for these clients as they do not have a strong enough psych to hold advanced practices. Therefore, counsellors and psychotherapists must understand that yoga is not a one-size-fits-all approach, and individualize and tailor yoga practices to match the unique needs of the client in order to avoid prescribing inappropriate yoga techniques that could lead to risks and injuries.

The last aspect in the practice of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy involves bringing in yoga philosophy into therapy sessions. As mentioned in the results of this
study, this phase of integration involves the therapist drawing upon certain yogic teachings and philosophies that are relevant to the needs of clients and which capture the essence of yogic wisdom. Vishvketu and Panwar (2008) explained that yoga philosophy goes hand in hand with yoga practices and techniques, as these teachings are the fundamental background principles that serve to support the practice of yoga asana, meditation, and pranayama. Yoga scholars Prabhavananda and Isherwood (2001) explained that according to traditional yogic scripture, a practitioner should follow yogic principles when they are undertaking yoga practices in order to experience the full benefits and fruition of their yoga practice. Without following the yogic teachings on living a positive and balanced life, the student may not be ready to progress toward higher yogic practices and experiences (Prabhavananda, & Isherwood, 2001). Yogic teachings and philosophies are relevant to the practice of yoga in counselling and psychotherapy because these teachings address the very core principles of yoga and support clients in experiencing the full benefits of yoga practices and techniques. Yoga is not just a physical practice but also a practical way of life, a way of relating to oneself and the larger world, and yoga philosophies bring this aspect of yoga to clients.

Though the philosophies and teachings of yoga are vast, there are certain key yogic teachings and principles that participants of this study mentioned as being highly applicable for clients with mental health issues, and which they would regularly bring into counselling and psychotherapy practice. These are the teachings of yamas and niyamas from the yogic scriptures of the Patajali’s Yoga Sutras. The yamas and niyamas are moral codes of conduct and observances for right living, such as living in harmony with nature and ones true self. Vishvketu and Panwar (2008) explained that these major moral conducts of behaviors called the yamas include non-harming (ahmisa), truthfulness (satya), non-stealing (asteya), regulation of sexual conduct (brahmacharya), and lack of greed (aparigraha). The niyamas are the complements to the
yamas and include purity of the body and mind (shaucha), contentment (santosha), austerity such as disciplined spiritual practices (tapas), the study of the sacred scriptures and self-study (svadhyaya), and devotion to a divine ideal (ishvara- pranidhana). Several participants mentioned that through teaching clients about the yamas and niyamas, clients were able to learn about self-compassion, non-judgment, and self-love. Also, Sullivan et al. (2018) has mentioned how practicing yoga philosophies such as Patajali’s yamas and niyamas, in therapeutic settings for clients is an “ethical intention setting” process that can lead to the development of positive qualities, such as greater resilience, improved cognitive states, “introception,” and “promote positive physiological and affective states” (p. 12). Sullivan et al. (2018) views the yamas and niyamas as helping clients to establish an ethical and positive way of living harmonious with all of life, and which can lead to transformations in thoughts, feelings, physiology and behaviors. The yamas and niyamas are therefore practical and highly applicable yogic philosophies for clients in counselling and psychotherapy, and can guide clients toward living a balanced and harmonious life and maintaining mental and emotional well-being.

In contrast to what this current research study finds, Patwardhan (2016) wrote that the core philosophy of yoga is actually at odds with and in contrast to Western psychotherapy, and that mixing the two are “impossible” (p. 2). He stated that the core principle of yoga, which is spiritual in nature, aims to transcend the “I’, the individual self, and recognizes the illusionary nature of life. Whereas Western psychotherapy instead focuses on expanding and elaborating on the “I.” Patwardhan (2016) wrote,

At core, yoga philosophy is exactly opposite of the philosophical foundation of Western psychotherapy…. Psychotherapy accepts “I” of an individual as something real and tangible, and therefore manageable and accessible to manipulation. Antithetically, yoga philosophy denies the existence of “I” and considers it as an illusion, and strives to dispel
the ignorance through spiritual enlightenment to subsequently deny and dissolve the notion (of “I”) (p. 2).

Patwardhan (2016) firmly believes that the spiritual components of yoga do not mix well with Western psychotherapy, and therefore, making yoga a viable practice in psychotherapy requires that “the spiritual components should be sorted out from the mental tools and techniques of yoga,” when being integrated into psychotherapy (p. 3).

There are some limitations to the arguments that Patwardhan (2016) has made regarding the incompatibility of the spiritual aspects of yoga in Western psychotherapy. Many participants of this current study stated that this very spiritual component of yoga, which looks at thoughts as illusionary, is actually what resonated with many of their clients and gave them a sense of relief and clarity about their own life and personal reality. Facco, Lucangeli, and Tressoldi (2018) talk about a subpopulation of clients who are highly spiritual in nature and have had transcendental experiences where the I was transcended into a greater spiritual reality. These subpopulations of people may understand the spiritual depth and core wisdom of yoga which is transcendental. Facco et al. (2018) writes, “Mystical experiences represent a sort of bridge between ordinary conscious activity and a spiritual or transcendental dimension and might have an important cognitive value” (p. 2). According to Facco et al. (2018), spirituality should be seen as a function of the mind, specifically “the highest expression of the human mind,” and thus the mind and spirituality should be understood as one unit in Western models of mental health (p.12). This has significant implications for counselling and psychotherapy; the therapists perspectives of the spiritual dimensions being separate from the psychological dimensions can dissolve when therapists recognize that the psychological and spiritual aspects of a person are intertwined and connected. This understanding can lead therapists to embrace the spiritual side of yoga in their therapy practice. In doing so therapists are catering to client populations who subscribe to holistic
views about mental health and who have had their own mystical experiences of transcendental states of consciousness. For these clients, the yogic models and perceptions of reality may be more valid than the current limited views of Western counselling and psychotherapy.

Each aspect of yoga that is integrated into counselling and psychotherapy – yoga models, yoga practices, and yoga philosophy—plays an important role in the success of bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. Integrating yoga models into counselling and psychotherapy sessions provides therapists with a holistic understanding of the client’s issues from the mind, body, energetic, and spiritual perspectives, and can address the client’s needs from a multidimensional level. Bringing yoga practices and techniques into therapy is the practical application of yoga and gives clients concrete tools and techniques to practice in counselling and psychotherapy and on their own at home. Integrating yoga philosophy into therapy sessions goes hand in hand with yoga practices and techniques, because these teachings build the fundamental ethical principles that serve to support the practice of yoga. Yoga philosophy grounds yoga practices by giving clients an understanding of the deeper meaning and purpose of yoga practices and techniques.

The impacts of yoga on clients in counselling and psychotherapy. Participants of this research study indicated the impacts that their clients experienced when practicing yoga in counselling and psychotherapy. According to results of this study, yoga in counselling and psychotherapy contributes to several positive changes for clients, which include: (a) proper breathing habits for mental health benefits; (b) embodiment and self-awareness; (c) accessing repressed thoughts and feelings; (d) acceptance toward oneself and life; (e) non-attachment through a witnessing attitude; and (f) changes in self-perceptions through relaxation.

Several participants of this study mentioned the critical role that proper breathing plays when teaching clients yoga. Focusing on helping clients learn proper breathing habits through
yoga practices is a key element of yoga that provides clients with several benefits such as better emotional regulation, relief of distress, reduced anxiety, and improved energy levels. Singh (2017) stated the numerous benefits of cultivating proper breathing, some of which include reducing anxiety, stress, and depression, and increasing well-being and health. Singh (2017) wrote, “In the Yogic tradition, next to Asana (posture) is regulation of breath (Pranayama). It is considered as a mainstay for the regulation of mental processes” (p. 2). The first quality that clients develop from practicing yoga is proper breathing habits, and is based upon the yogic understanding that proper breathing is the main agent that helps purify the body and mind, release energetic stagnations in the body, calm the nervous system, and therefore improves overall mood states.

As mentioned by participants of this study, yoga practices teach clients how to slow down, move mindfully, and pay attention their body and inner experiences. This leads clients to the development of the second major quality, embodiment and self-awareness, from practicing yoga in counselling and psychotherapy. Research by Nguyen-Feng et al. (2019) noted the observations that therapists had about their clients who were practicing yoga: Many clients had become much more self-aware and connected to their body as a result of practicing yoga. Nguyen-Feng et al. (2019) stated that, “Both the therapists and the yoga instructors noted a strengthened connection to the body among the clients” (p. 37). The practice of yoga in therapy strengthens the client’s connection to their body, which is an important part of teaching clients how to be aware of and attend to their mental, emotional, and physical states.

Results of this research study indicate that yoga practices teach clients about the process of being non-reactive and witnessing the mind and body. In the third quality that clients develop from practicing yoga, acceptance toward oneself and life, clients can learn to become less reactive toward their thoughts and feelings and to ‘be’ with what arises while doing their yoga
practices. As clients become aware of their body and notice their feelings and physical sensations, they also learn to hold space for what is surfacing, thereby developing greater acceptance toward themselves and difficult life situations. Kinser et al. (2013) conducted a research study that investigated how participants going through depression were affected by practicing yoga. The self-reports of participants led these authors to conclude that “the participants seemed to value the yoga classes and home practice because it taught them to accept their current situation and practice yogic techniques that would best meet their needs” (p. 406). By clients learning to focus inward and to be with what arises using their yoga practices, this leads to clients developing greater acceptance toward themselves and life.

When clients begin to slow down and pay attention to their body, through the practice of yoga, many things can begin to surface, such as unpleasant memories and thoughts that clients have been holding within their body and deeper psyche. This point was mentioned by many participants of the current research study. The fourth quality that is developed through yoga practices is accessing repressed thoughts and feelings. Clients can notice the self-judgments and critical thoughts that arise during a yoga pose that they experience as challenging. When these experiences do occur in session, counsellors and psychotherapists can take time after the yoga practice to process these experiences with clients. The act of slowing down and relaxing the body and mind and engaging in certain yoga practices can resurface old emotions, memories, and limiting thought patterns. Duros and Crowley (2014) spoke about how yoga practices can help clients to meet the traumas that they have been holding in their body, and with yoga practice, to learn to release these tightly held experiences. Also, Vorkapic (2016) talked about how the practice of meditation can lead to the resurfacing of suppressed thoughts and feelings. Vorkapic (2016) said that with ongoing meditation practice, one learns to become more relaxed, and this relaxation response allows for suppressed emotions and thoughts to arise to the surface of the
meditator’s mind. Therefore, bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy can assist clients in the process of uncovering and reconnecting to repressed thoughts, feelings, and memories. This can help therapists support clients in healing old traumas and repressed thoughts and feelings.

Participants of this current study mentioned that meditation practices taught their clients to observe themselves by watching their own thoughts and cultivating a witnessing attitude. When therapists integrate meditation practices and yoga philosophies about witnessing the mind, clients learn to create separate from themselves and their thoughts, and thereby experience themselves as having a choice to give attention to the thoughts or not. This witnessing of the mind helps clients cultivate greater non-attachment to thoughts and emotions, and therefore learn to treat the contents of their mind more objectively. Yoga practices teach clients about the impermanence of thoughts and thereby help them to view their thoughts from a place of witnessing. Being able to be the witness of the mind has been described by other research as a key agent for releasing mental agitations (Vorkapic, 2016). Vorkapic (2016) explained that cultivating a detached attitude is a powerful tool because it allows the meditator to withdraw their attention from thoughts and internal conflicts and in this process weaken the power that these thoughts have had over the meditator’s life. This ability to withdraw one’s attention from thoughts and regain mastery over the mind occurs during moments of deep relaxation and meditation (Vorkapic, 2016). This fifth quality, cultivating non-attachment and a witnessing attitude, develops for clients when clients practice yoga and learn to anchor their awareness throughout the body, bring their attention into the present moment, and witness the sensations of the body and mind.

The last quality that can arise for clients who practice yoga in counselling and psychotherapy is changes in self-perception through relaxation. When therapists can help clients
achieve a state of calm through yoga practices, this can be a profound experience for clients who have spent months or years in a state of restlessness, anxiety, and physical agitation. The new experiences of calm, grounding, and relaxation can provide clients with a sense of hope, that they do not need to remain anxious or depressed, and that they can change the way they feel and experience life, by engaging in yoga practices. Several participants of this study echoed this point when they described how their clients had experienced transformations in thoughts and perceptions when experiencing deep states of relaxation during yoga practices in therapy sessions. Similarly, Kinser et al. (2013) investigated the experiences that participants with mental health issues had when practicing yoga and found that participants felt that yoga had interrupted their negative thinking patterns and led to changes in self-perceptions. Kinser et al. (2013) reported, “The practice of yoga seemed to help participants directly interrupt their typical patterns of persistent stressful thinking” (p. 405). When clients experience calm and relaxation in their body through yoga, this provides them with new mental and internal experiences, which can lead to positive changes in how clients perceive themselves, others, and life experiences.

As reported by all participants of this study, integrating yoga practices in therapy is found to contribute to positive developments in clients, such as positive emotional regulation; increases in embodiment, self-awareness, and self-acceptance; accessing repressed thoughts and feelings; more self-acceptance; non-attachment toward distressing thoughts and feelings; and positive changes in self-perceptions from relaxation of the body and mind. The outcomes of yoga in therapy are aligned with the aims of counselling and psychotherapy, which are to help clients develop better coping skills, learn emotional regulation, develop self-awareness, overcome limiting thoughts and feelings, and increase sense of empowerment and overall well-being. Counsellors and psychotherapists who learn to integrate yoga into counselling and psychotherapy
are providing clients with powerful practices, teachings, and approaches that can bring clients several therapeutic benefits and create changes at the level of the body, mind, and spirit.
Figure 2. The Tri-Process Model of Integrating Yoga into Counselling and Psychotherapy

**Therapists Preparation for Integrating Yoga into Counselling & Psychotherapy**
- Developing a personal yoga practice.
- Obtaining formal yoga education & training.

**Therapists Preparing Clients to Practice Yoga in Therapy Sessions**
- Determining the client’s readiness for yoga.
- Psychoeducation on yoga & mental health.
- Develop the therapeutic relationship.
- Orienting clients towards their body.

**The Practice of Integrating Yoga Into Counselling & Psychotherapy**
- Yoga Theories.
- Yoga Practices.
- Yoga Philosophy.

**The Impacts of Yoga on Clients in Therapy Session**
- Proper breathing patterns for emotion regulation.
- Embodiment & self-awareness.
- Acceptance towards oneself & life.
- Accessing repressed thoughts & feelings.
- Non-attachment through a witnessing attitude.
- Changes in self-perceptions through relaxation.
5.4 Integrating the Themes: The Tri-Process Model of Integrating Yoga into Counselling and Psychotherapy

This section describes how the three core themes of the study integrate into one coherent theory that answers the main research question, *what are the processes of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy?* The Tri-Process Model of Integrating Yoga into Counselling and Psychotherapy (see Figure 2) provides a visual framework that illustrates participants’ accounts of how they integrated yoga into counselling and psychotherapy into one coherent theory that in turn informs the therapists’ therapeutic practice of integration. This framework includes the influential components, major themes, and subthemes involved in the therapists’ path and practice of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy.

All the influential components that represent the main research question of the study are shown as three circles in this model. The first process of integration is represented by the core theme of *therapists’ preparation for integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy*. The second major process of integration is represented by the core theme, *therapists preparing clients for practicing yoga in therapy sessions*. The final process of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy is indicated by the third core theme, *the practice of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy*. Within each core theme are its respective major themes and aspects.

The first core theme, *therapists’ preparation for integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy*, describes how therapists prepare themselves for integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. The major processes and components involved in the therapist’s personal preparation for integration include developing a personal yoga practice (through attending yoga classes and developing a regular, personal yoga routine) and undergoing formal yoga education and training (which includes taking a yoga teacher training program, yoga therapy training
program, or other related classes, workshops, and training/education opportunities). According to Kamradt (2017), when therapists develop a personal yoga practice and undergo formal yoga education and training, these experiences with yoga provide them with the foundations of yoga, an understanding of its therapeutic applications, and the sufficient competencies to successfully integrate yoga into therapy practice. Therefore, this first core theme prepares therapists with the competencies and skills needed to safely and effectively bring yoga into therapy practice.

After therapists have prepared themselves for integration, the next major process of integration is preparing their clients to practice yoga in session. The second core theme is represented as therapists preparing clients for practicing yoga in therapy sessions. The relationship between the first core theme and this second core theme is indicated by an arrow that begins from the first core theme and points toward the second core theme.

The first core theme also informs the third core theme, the practice of bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. The therapists’ personal yoga practice, training, and education (first core theme) provide them with the competencies, education, and skills to bring yoga into the counselling and psychotherapy sessions (third core theme). This relationship is indicated by an arrow that starts from the first core theme and points toward the third core theme.

This second core theme, therapists preparing clients to practice yoga in therapy sessions, describes the ways in which therapists prepare their clients to practice yoga in counselling and psychotherapy and involves four major tasks: determining the client’s readiness and consent to practice yoga in session, providing clients with psychoeducation on yoga for mental health, developing the therapeutic relationship, and orienting clients to their body. The first major task, determining the client’s readiness and suitability to practice yoga in session, occurs through the initial dialog that therapists have with clients, which explores clients’ beliefs about practicing yoga in session, clients’ previous experiences with yoga, and their final consent to practice yoga
in session. Once the counsellors and psychotherapists have obtained consent from their clients to integrate yoga into session, this leads to the next task in preparing clients for integration—providing clients with psychoeducation on yoga for mental health. In this process, therapists provide clients with background information on yoga, such as an overview of yoga, the impacts of yoga on mental health, and how yoga will be integrated into therapy. Providing clients with psychoeducation allows clients to be better informed regarding the practice of yoga in therapy, and contributes to clients developing the preparedness, understanding, and motivation to practice yoga in session. The next process in preparing clients for integration is developing the therapeutic relationship, which develops throughout counselling and psychotherapy. Developing the therapeutic relationship provides clients with a sense of safety and trust in the therapist and the therapeutic process and provides them with the support needed to overcome any possible psychological obstacles to practicing yoga in session. The last major process for therapists in preparing their clients for yoga in therapy is orienting clients to their body. This involves helping clients develop greater awareness and connection to their body and thereby enter their yoga practices with greater mindfulness, self-awareness, and body connection. Practicing yoga with mindfulness, self-awareness, and body connection can minimize yoga injury caused by lack of body connection and self-awareness, and therefore supports clients in doing yoga more safely and effectively. According to Duros and Crowley (2014), when therapists prepare clients for mind-body interventions, such as exploring feelings and perceptions regarding the mind-body intervention, obtaining consent from clients to practice the intervention, plus providing clients with psychoeducation regarding the mind-body based intervention, leads to creating a sense of collaboration with the client and fosters a sense of safety, trust, support, and preparedness in the client to practice this holistic therapeutic intervention successfully.
Once therapists have prepared their clients for the practice of yoga in counselling and psychotherapy, they enter the third core theme in the process of integration, *the practice of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy*. The relationship between the second core theme and third core theme is represented by an arrow beginning from the second core theme and pointing down toward the third core theme.

In the final core theme, *the practice of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy*, therapists begin to integrate various aspects and practices of yoga into the therapy sessions. The aspects of yoga that are integrated into therapy include yoga theories, yoga practices, and yoga philosophy. Yoga theories in counselling and psychotherapy provide therapists with a theoretical framework to understand clients’ mental health issues from a holistic and yogic perspective. The yoga theories most commonly used by therapists in counselling and psychotherapy sessions, according to results of this study, are the chakra theory, the triguna theory, and the pancha kosha theory. Each yoga theory examines mental health at the mind, body, energetic and spiritual level and guides therapists in selecting the most appropriate interventions and techniques to address clients’ mental health from a multidimensional level. Integrating yoga practices and techniques is the next major task of bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy, and is the practical application of yoga in therapy sessions. The yoga practices that are integrated into therapy include yoga postural practice (yoga asana), yogic breathing (pranayama) and meditation practices. Therapists teach clients how to use these yogic practices to address mental health challenges, and clients are encouraged to practice these yoga techniques on their own, outside of session, as a way of self-care and self-regulation. The third aspect of yoga that is integrated into therapy is yoga philosophy, most commonly the teachings from Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras on the yamas and niyamas. Integrating yoga philosophy into session provides clients with the essence of yogic wisdom and thereby helps clients translate yoga practices into a
philosophy and way of living. Yoga philosophy enhances and supports the client practice of yoga so clients may experience yoga as more than just a physical practice but as a way of interacting with and understanding oneself and life.

The impacts of yoga on clients is indicated in this third core theme as, the impacts of yoga on clients in counselling and psychotherapy. This major theme describes the impacts of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy on clients. The arrow pointing down from the third core theme to this major theme expresses the relationship between bringing the practice of yoga into counselling and psychotherapy and the impact of integration on clients (see Figure 1 subheading the impacts of yoga on clients in therapy sessions). According to the results of this study, the practice of integrating yoga into therapy sessions leads to clients experiencing the following benefits: (a) proper breathing patterns for emotion regulation; (b) embodiment and self-awareness; (c) acceptance toward oneself and life; (d) accessing repressed thoughts and feelings; (e) non-attachment through a witnessing attitude; and (f) changes in self-perceptions through relaxation. These benefits of yoga on clients are the result of therapists undergoing several processes of integration, specifically therapists preparing themselves and their clients for integration and bringing yoga theories, practices, and philosophies into counselling and psychotherapy. Similarly, research by Nguyen-Feng et al. (2019) found that therapists had observed several positive changes in their clients when clients were practicing a trauma-based yoga program. Some of these observations included clients becoming more self-aware, more connected to their body, increased sense of calm, and reduction in self-judgmental as a result of practicing yoga.

The third core theme, the practice of bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy, also informs the first core theme, therapists’ preparation for integration, and the second core theme, therapists preparing clients for practicing yoga in therapy sessions. This inverse
interaction and relationship among the third core theme with the first and second core themes is represented as the outer arrows that begins from the third core theme and point towards the first and second core themes. When therapists practice the integration of yoga into therapy sessions (third core theme), the application of yoga in session is also an educational process for therapists in which they continue to learn about the process of integration (first core theme). With continual practice of bringing yoga into counselling and psychotherapy sessions (third core theme), therapists are invariably developing greater skills and experiences with yoga and thus developing the personal preparation for further integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy (first core theme). This relationship between the third core theme and first core theme is indicated by an arrow starting from the third core theme and pointing toward the first core theme. The practice of bringing yoga into therapy can also inform therapists regarding how clients need to be prepared for yoga practices (second core theme). Therapists can observe how their clients are experiencing yoga in session, such as what challenges their clients are experiencing when doing yoga, and therefore where clients may need greater preparation before beginning certain yoga practices. The relationship between the third core theme and second core theme is represented by an arrow that begins at the third core theme and points towards the second core theme.

The Tri-Process Model of Integrating Yoga Into Counselling and Psychotherapy captures the total integration process and reveals how therapists can safely, effectively, and successfully integrate yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. The purpose of this framework is to organize all core themes and underlying themes into one coherent structure. The Tri-Process Model of Integrating Yoga Into Counselling and Psychotherapy is the accounts of participants explaining their process of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. It includes the paths, activities, components, and practices of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. The entire model is represented as a triangle, depicting the trifold nature of the integration process.
All the themes, components, and activities of participants are shown to be interrelated and connected within this model, and linked to the central research focus, *the processes of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy.*
CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

The following section provides a summary of the research study and its major themes and findings. The larger implications of this study for the mental health field, as well as a review of the limitations and strengths of the study, are also provided. This section concludes by offering recommendations regarding the future directions for research in yoga and mental health.

6.1 Research Summary

The purpose of this research study was to provide a conceptual framework on the processes of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. The main research question guiding the study was what are the processes of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy? Ten participants who identified as counsellors or psychotherapists and who integrated yoga into their therapy practice were interviewed about their processes of integration. Participants spoke about their experiences of integration, such as their initial experiences with yoga, undergoing yoga training and education, and how they practiced yoga in counselling and psychotherapy. The results of the interviews led to the development of core themes and elements pertaining to the process of integration yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. From these themes, a model of integration was developed called the Tri-Process Model of Integrating Yoga Into Counselling and Psychotherapy. This model describes the three core processes of integration and how they interrelate to each other and are important to the therapist’s success of practicing yoga in counselling and psychotherapy. These major processes include (a) therapists’ preparation for integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy; (b) therapists preparing clients for practicing yoga in therapy sessions; and (c) the practice of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy.
The first phase in the process of integration, and the first core theme, therapists’ preparation for integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy, describes how therapists prepare themselves for bringing yoga into their counselling and psychotherapy practice. There are two major elements pertaining to how therapists prepare themselves for integration, which include: cultivating a personal yoga practice and undergoing formal yoga education and training. Cultivating a personal yoga practice involves the therapist attending yoga classes and also having their own yoga routine that they practice on a regular basis. Undergoing yoga education and training includes the therapist pursuing a yoga teacher training program, a yoga therapy training program, and/or other yoga-related educational and training opportunities such as yoga workshops, conferences, and classes, and readings. When therapists develop a personal yoga practice and have had various yoga training and educational experiences, they gain the skills needed to safely, effectively, and successfully bring yoga into counselling and psychotherapy practice. Yoga practice, training, and education allows therapists to experience yoga intimately for themselves, to embody the teachings and practices of yoga, and to gain the skills and competencies in the foundations of yoga and therapeutic applications of yoga for mental health.

The second phase in the process of integration, and the second core theme, therapists preparing clients to practice yoga in therapy sessions, describes the steps that therapists take to ensure that their clients are ready to practice yoga in counselling and psychotherapy. Participants in the study talked about certain foundations that were laid in session before bringing yoga practices to clients. These included (a) determining the client’s readiness for practicing yoga; (b) providing clients with psychoeducation about the practice of yoga for mental health; (c) developing the therapeutic relationship; and (d) orienting clients to their body. When therapists implement these processes in therapy, they are preparing their clients mentally, emotionally, and
physically to practice yoga in session. This process of preparing clients for integration sets the foundations in session to ensure that yoga will be practiced in a safe and effective manner.

The third and final phase in the process of integration, and the third core theme, *the practice of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy*, describes the yoga practices and approaches that are most appropriate for counselling and psychotherapy sessions. Three major aspects of yoga were identified by participants as being most applicable for therapy. These included yoga models, yoga techniques, and yoga philosophy. Yoga models are the yogic theories and frameworks that describe mental health from a mind, body, and spirit perspective and therefore offer therapists a broader and more holistic way of understanding their clients’ mental health issues. Once therapists can understand their clients’ mental health from both a psychological and a yogic perspective, therapists can then provide clients with psychotherapeutic and yogic interventions that address the client’s mental health issues holistically.

Yoga techniques in counselling and psychotherapy are the practical applications of yoga. Therapists teach clients various yogic practices and techniques, such as postural practice, yogic breathing techniques, and meditation practices, to help clients manage and address their mental health issues. Clients also learn how to integrate yoga into their personal lives and practice yoga outside of therapy as a way of coping and managing their thoughts and feelings.

The third aspect of yoga in therapy, yoga philosophy, provides clients with the essential teachings and wisdom of yoga, such as how to live in balance and harmony in mind, body, and spirit. Yoga philosophy and yoga practice are not distinct from each other but are intricately connected. Yoga philosophy supports the client in practicing yoga and encourages them to integrate yogic principles of health and well-being into their daily lives.
In summary, these three major core themes describe the process of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy and are represented as the *Tri-Process Model of Integrating Yoga into Counselling and Psychotherapy*.

### 6.2 Implications of the Study

Some of the implications of this study include addressing the limitations of Western counselling and psychotherapy approaches, which focus on the mind and minimize the role of the body, mind and spirit connection in mental health. This research study enhances the field of counselling and psychotherapy by providing more holistic approaches to mental health that address the body, mind, and spirit. This study also supports the development of existing yoga and mental health training and educational programs by providing empirically supported research on the detailed processes of integration. Finally, the results of this study offer guidance for existing or upcoming therapists who are looking for more direction and clarification on how they can bring yoga into their counselling and psychotherapy practice.

The field of counselling and psychotherapy has been criticized for not having an adequate framework for addressing trauma in the body. Duros and Crowley (2014) stated that “what is known is that trauma will not go away by telling one’s story” (p. 238). Based on trauma research by van der Kolk and colleagues (2007a), it was found that the physiological consequences of trauma must also be addressed in psychotherapy. The physiology and nervous system can store deeper emotions and sustain emotional patterns. Conventional counselling and psychotherapy is limited in addressing the role of the body in mental health and as a result many clients continue to feel stuck in their trauma and mental health issues. The current research study addresses these gaps and is aligned with the recent research findings regarding the importance of addressing emotions at the level of physiology and the nervous system. As counsellors and psychotherapists
learn to integrate yogic practice and approaches in therapy, they are also involving the body and helping clients to create deeper changes at the level of the physiology and nervous system. This integration of the mind-body connection in therapy practice may lead to greater success rates for clients. Forbes et al. (2011) commented in her research that many therapists are beginning to take greater interest in finding ways to incorporate the body into their clinical practice. Forbes et al. (2011) wrote that “the biggest change has occurred in the past decade; the number of psychologists who understand the value of the body in the psychotherapeutic process has risen dramatically” (p. 8). Since many therapists are now beginning to understand the value of the body in the therapeutic process, the current research study offers information and guidance on how to bring the body into mental health practices through yogic practices.

The field of counselling and psychotherapy has been criticized for not being able to address the needs of populations looking for more holistic perspectives and approaches towards their mental health care, such as minority populations that hold different worldviews and beliefs about mental health. Moodley et al. (2008) wrote that Western approaches to mental health tend to narrowly focus on the mind while ignoring the roles of the body and spirit in mental health care. The lack of holism in counselling and psychotherapy has led to the underutilization of psychotherapy services by many minority groups and also populations seeking holistic care (Moodley et al., 2008). This current research study broadens the scope of counselling and psychotherapy practice by looking at how counsellors and psychotherapists can integrate more holistic-based approaches into their therapy practices and thereby cater to the needs of those groups and populations seeking a ‘whole-person’ approach to mental health care. As the practice of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy begins to become a more viable field of practice, more under-represented populations may begin to turn toward this holistic-oriented therapy approach and thus utilize mental health services that they require. The stigma that many
cultures hold about counselling and psychotherapy being a Western approach that neglects certain key values and principles of health and well-being can be lessened as a new way of collaboration between Eastern and Western approaches to mental health arise in the practice of counselling and psychotherapy.

Yoga in counselling and psychotherapy is a new and emerging field and currently there is a scarcity of research examining how therapists can integrate yoga into their clinical practice. As a result, counsellors and psychotherapists have little direction and guidance regarding the processes involved in successfully integrating yoga into their therapy practice. The current study addresses these limitations and offers guidance and information for counsellors and psychotherapists regarding the detailed process of integration. Emerging psychotherapists and counsellors, plus existing mental health professionals, can refer to the results of this study to gain better understanding and directions on the processes of integration. The findings of this research study can also inform existing or emerging yoga and mental health-related training programs by providing empirically support data on the detailed processes of integration, and thereby addressing any gaps in their training programs.

6.3 Limitations

There are few limitations to mention regarding the methodology and research results of this study. Firstly, the study employed ten research participants within the Greater Toronto Area. The participants selected within this particular region may not be generalizable to larger populations of psychotherapists and counsellors within Canada or other regions of the world. How counsellors and psychotherapists integrate yoga into their clinical practice may differ across provinces, regions, or countries due to different ethical guidelines and regulations of practicing counselling and psychotherapy, differences in attitudes and beliefs of those populations, and also
perceptions about yoga and how to practice yoga. For example, mental health professionals in India, the birthplace of yoga, may incorporate more of the cultural or esoteric aspects of yoga when integrating yoga into their counselling and psychotherapy practice. Prayers, ceremonies, mantras, and astrology may be practiced alongside yoga asana, meditation, and breathing because the spiritual and esoteric aspects of yoga could resonate well with the population’s worldview and beliefs about the spiritual in mental health. Whereas in the Western world, some of these more esoteric and spiritual aspects of yoga have been separated from the therapeutic aspects of yoga in order to make yoga more medicalized and to fit into the Western framework of mental health. It would be beneficial for research to be conducted with sample sizes from different locations around the globe in order to compare how therapists from different regions practice the integration of yoga in counselling and psychotherapy. This would offer the field of counselling and psychotherapy a greater and more complete picture of the larger processes and paths of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy, and from different societal perspectives.

The second limitation in the study includes the unequal ratio of female and male participants. The study employed nine women and one man, and the reason for this uneven balance of gender was due to the researcher finding a limited number of male counsellors and psychotherapists who were also practicing yoga in their therapy practice. The imbalances in gender might be due to the fact that yoga is practiced by more women than men, which is evident in many yoga classes, training programs, and conferences, where female participant outnumbers male participants (Park, Braun, & Siegal, 2015). According to the 2016 study of yoga in America (Yoga Journal & Yoga Alliance, 2016), which looked at the practices and trends of yoga in America, this study found that over 70 percent of yoga practitioners were women. Similarly, within the field of counselling and psychotherapy there are more female practitioners than male practitioners (Diamond, 2012). Diamond (2012) observed that women outnumbered men in many
masters and doctoral programs related to sociology, counselling, and psychology. Diamond (2012) reported that, “Women outnumber men in doctoral psychology programs by a ratio of at least 3 to 1” (para. 1). The low participation rate of men in yoga and in counselling and psychotherapy contributed to the reasons why the current research study had low male participation.

6.4 Strengths

The strengths of this present research study included the diversity of participants that were selected for the interviews. Participants varied in the kinds of mental health training that they had received. Some participants had a background in social work while others had trained in clinical psychology or counselling and psychotherapy. There were also participants with a medical background who were practicing physicians for over 15 years. Also, participants had a variety of unique yoga training and educational experiences, with some participants focusing on the philosophy of yoga while others trained in more of the therapeutic and medical aspects of yoga. Some participants were actively teaching yoga classes in their communities while others instead maintained their own personal yoga practices. Even though participants varied in background, education, and training in mental health and yoga, there were similar themes and experiences of the integration process across all participants. This reveals that the core themes and elements found within this study on the process of integration may represent the elements of such integration work.

The qualitative research design is the strength of the research methodology because participants were able to rely on their own unique experiences of integration with minimal influence by the interviewer. The qualitative design of the research study provided participants with semi-structured interviews and gave them the opportunity to explore in depth their personal
experiences of integration, and share details about the subtle aspects and processes of integration. The semi-structured interviews allowed participants the flexibility to choose which elements of their integration work they wanted to focus on. Several participants talked about integration for 90 minutes, and none of the interviews were less than one hour, thus providing participants with the time needed to elaborate on their personal experiences of integration. As a result, rich accounts and details of the journey and the intricate processes of integration were revealed.

6.5 Future Directions

Over the last decade, there has been a large body of research supporting the therapeutic applications of yoga as an effective adjunct to mental health treatment. There is also a rising interest in counsellors and psychotherapists who are seeking to learn more about how to bring yoga into their clinical practice due to talk therapy not adequately addressing the physical and spiritual aspects of their clients’ mental health issues. Currently there are very few training programs that provide therapists with the education and skill development needed to successfully integrate yoga into counselling and psychotherapy. Providing counsellors and psychotherapists with educational and training programs that focus on learning about how to bring yoga into therapy would be the next steps for the field of counselling and psychotherapy. These programs would include learning objectives such as personal development, assessing clients’ readiness and suitability to practice yoga, and learning about the safety and ethical practice of bringing yoga into therapy sessions. These training programs would address the needs of mental health practitioners who are seeking ways to incorporate a holistic approach into their clinical practice.

In addition, larger mental health fields, like psychiatry, can begin to consider the benefits of bridging body-oriented and Eastern approaches, like yoga, into their mainstream practices. For example, participant Joseph of this research study had shared that, “I think that yoga is such a
powerful foundation for any kind of change or transformation… I just hope that, um, the whole mental health care system will continue to become more open to this, especially, you know, areas like psychiatry.” This integration of yoga into the larger mental health field could provide many benefits for clients as mental health professionals begin to acknowledge and include the role of the mind-body connection in their treatment interventions.

Continual research on the ways in which psychotherapists and counsellors bring yoga into their counselling and psychotherapy practice, with larger sample sizes and across different regions of North America and other countries, would also be beneficial in order to discover even more processes and elements of integrating yoga into therapy, and differences in integration practices across populations from other parts of the world. Obtaining more information on integration could lead to the development of training manuals and books that provide detailed accounts and processes of what integrating yoga into psychotherapy looks like across the globe. It could thereby expand therapists’ understanding of the many ways in which yoga is being practiced in the mental health field worldwide. Therapists taking an interest in the different ways that yoga is practiced in mental health globally can foster international dialog and cross-collaboration between mental health professionals from various areas of professional practice and regions in the form of international conferences, where information and practices are shared. Such international dialog and exchange of ideas could benefit the overall field of mental health by incorporating new and innovative ways of bringing the mind, body and spirit connection into therapy practices.

6.6 Concluding Remarks

It is imperative for therapists who are interested in bringing yoga into their clinical practice to be informed about the processes required for best practices of integration. If therapists
lack the competencies and understanding of the processes of integration, they may not be practicing yoga in a safe and effective manner and therefore possibly put clients at risk and minimize the therapeutic benefits of yoga. The current research study examines the processes of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy practice. A midlevel theory is offered that describes the elements, processes, and aspects of integration. This research investigation has attempted to answer the following question: *What are the processes of integrating yoga into counselling and psychotherapy?* By learning about integration, therapists are incorporating more mind-body-oriented approaches in their therapy practice and catering to client populations that are seeking holistic approaches to address their mental health.

The practice of yoga has spread across the globe and people from all over the world have discovered the potency of this ancient practice to transform the mind and body. Yoga transcends culture and race and provides benefits for many who practice this art form. When yoga is integrated into mental health care, the therapeutic benefits for clients include greater reduction in stress, anxiety, depression, trauma, and other mental health issues; increases in mindfulness, self-awareness, relaxation, and positive mood states; and positive changes in thoughts and feelings. The world-renowned yoga master B.K.S Iyengar, who brought the ancient tradition of yoga into the Western world, said, “Yoga does not just change the way we see things, it transforms the person who sees” (Iyengar, Evans, & Abrams, 2005, p.61). Yoga is a practice that leads to transformation and may be the missing piece in Western mental health care practices.
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Appendix A

E-mail/ Letter for Initial Contact with Potential Participants

Dear [Potential participants name],

My name is Miss Rameet Singh (Doctorate student at OISE, in Counselling Psychology). I am currently conducting my doctorate research, which is examining the ways in which yoga can be integrated within mental health care. It would be an honour to interview you and learn about your experiences and journey in this area of yoga and mental health.

This research would involve an interview of about an hour to hour and half, and can be conducted at your place of practice, OISE (U of T) or any other agreeable location. In the interview you will be invited to share your experiences in using yoga within your psychotherapy practice, your views of mental health and healing, your process of integration and the training involved. I will not be asking questions about your clients, but simply about the integration process that you carry out. All information gathered will be held in confidentiality, under the university of Toronto guidelines.

Please refer to the attached ‘welcome and introduction’ letter for a detailed over of the study, including confidentiality, risks and benefits of participation and other pertinent information.

If you would like to participate, and/or you have any further questions and need clarification, please respond to this email or call me via cell number 647-504-7520. I would be happy to chat further. If you agree to participate, we can then set up a time and meeting place.

Thank you, I look forward to connecting with you,

Miss Rameet Singh, ME.d, Ed.D Candidate Counselling Psychology
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
Appendix B

Research Study: INVITATION/INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

_Holistic Mental Health Care: Integrating Yoga into Counselling and Psychotherapy_

_Dear [Name of potential participant]:_

My name is Rameet Singh and I am a graduate student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study that I am conducting with Canadian mental health workers. The study is under the supervision of Professor Roy Moodley and will help to fulfill requirements for my Doctor of Education degree.

WHAT IS THIS STUDY ABOUT?
I am conducting a study to examine the ways in which yoga is currently being incorporated into conventional mental healthcare in Canada. In this context, yoga is understood to include traditional yogic philosophy, yogic models, yogic lifestyle approaches as well as yogic practices and techniques (i.e. meditation, physical yoga posture, breathing techniques).

Over the last decade yoga has been recognized to provide great therapeutic benefits for its practitioners. Many people are now interested in mental health approaches that address the mind, body and spirit in healing. There is consensus among researchers and clinicians that greater holistic care is needed in mental health services and that mental health practice should adopt practices aligned with the health beliefs and values of the larger society. Currently there no concrete recommendations and framework on how yoga can be integrated into counselling and psychotherapy. My study hopes to address this gap in present knowledge.

In this study, I will conduct interviews with 8-12 Canadian mental health workers, who, like you, incorporate some yogic methodologies into their work with clients. I want to understand how this integration of yogic practices is actually being carried out.

For the interview, I am looking for individuals who:

• Are mental health workers trained in and currently practicing a Western psychological modality (e.g., psychiatrists, psychologists, psychotherapists, counsellors, social workers, addictions counsellors) and

• incorporate yogic practices with their clients

• Have had personal training with yoga, such as teacher’s certification, yoga therapist training, or have taken other courses, programs and training in yoga.

• Have worked in the mental health field for at least one year.
WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?
You will be asked to participate in one interview that will last for 60-90 minutes. In the interview you will be asked to talk about your experience with using both conventional psychological interventions and yogic healing practices with your clients. I will not be asking questions about your clients, but simply about the integration process that you carry out. I will be asking to discuss about your personal experience with yoga training and your reflection on any challenges and/or benefits of such integration.

With your consent, the interview will be audio taped. About three or four months following the interview, I will contact you over e-mail or telephone with the findings of this research (a collection of themes generated from all the interviews that describe ways in which integration of yogic practices is being accomplished by the participating mental health workers). You will be asked to provide your feedback on the findings. This feedback will be incorporated into the final report.

DO I HAVE TO PARTICIPATE?
Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate at any time, decline to answer any questions, and even withdraw during the course of the interview without any negative consequences. You will have a choice whether the information that you provide it to remain confidential (in which case you will be identified by a pseudonym in the report), or whether your real name is to be used.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS AND/OR BENEFITS TO PARTICIPATING?
There are no foreseeable risks involved in your participation in this research. Furthermore, your participation has the following benefits:

- You are one of the leaders in Canadian mental healthcare in terms of integrating yogic healing practices into your clinical work. Sharing your unique experience may inform other clinicians and researchers, as well as provide concrete recommendations to the mental healthcare system regarding most beneficial ways to work with clients interested in holistic mental health care.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE INFORMATION AFTER I HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY?
All of the information collected as a result of your participation in this study will remain strictly confidential. The data collected in the course of this research may be used for publication in journals or books, and/or for public presentations, but if you so choose, your identity (as mentioned earlier) will absolutely not be revealed. The data will be retained for a period of three years by Dr. Roy Moodley, and will be kept in a secure location, a locked filing cabinet at OISE/UT, Room 7-222. It will be accessible only to the principal investigator (Rameet Singh) and her supervisor (Dr. Roy Moodley). The tape recordings will be erased within a month of the transcripts being done.

If you would like a copy of the results of this research when it is available, we would be very happy to offer it to you. If so, please fill in your name and mailing or email address under the section "Request to Receive Summary of Results" of the Consent Form.
If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Research Ethics Review Office by e-mail (ethics.review@utoronto.ca) or phone (416-946-3273), or contact Dean Sharpe at 416-978-5585.

If you have any questions about the study please feel free to contact me, or my supervisor, Dr. Roy Moodley. Thank you for considering your participation in this research.

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VOLUNTEER'S DECLARATION OF INFORMED CONSENT

I understand that I will be participating in a research study examining the ways in which yogic healing practices are currently being incorporated into conventional mental healthcare. I have read the information letter describing the purpose and procedures of this study. I have had enough time to think about my participation in the study and I have been given the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation in this research is completely voluntary. I am free to answer some questions and not others and I can withdraw from the study at any time. I have been assured that all information collected in the study, will be held in confidence.

Regarding my anonymity in this research study, I choose to

☐ Have my real name included in the written report.

☐ Have my real name replaced by a pseudonym in the written report. In choosing this option, my real name will be held in strictest confidence.

I therefore agree that I will take part in this study.

Name: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________
1. DECLARATION OF RECEIPT OF INFORMED CONSENT FORM

☐ I have received a copy of this Consent Form.

2. REQUEST TO RECEIVE SUMMARY OF RESULTS
If you would like to receive a summary of the results of the study, please fill out the information below.

☐ Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the results of the study.

Please send me the summary by: ☐ E-mail ☐ Canada Post

Name: _______________________________  Email: _______________________________

Address: _______________________________________________________________

City: ____________________________  Province: ____________________________  Postal Code: ______________________________________________

Code: _______________________________________________________________

3. RESEARCHER RESPONSIBLE FOR CONDUCTING THE INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS:
I confirm that I have explained the nature of the research and supplied the volunteer with an information letter explaining the nature of this study and volunteer’s participation in terms that in my judgement are suited to their understanding.

Name: ______________________ Signature: ______________________

Date: ______________________
Appendix C

Participant Demographic Form

1. Description of educational background.

2. Brief description of work history, such as main populations served.

3. Brief description of current workplace setting, i.e. private, community, hospital or other (without identifiable information or any names)

4. Previous yoga training, including the major training programs undertaken and any additional trainings received.
Appendix D

FINAL REVISED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Question 1: Describing previous and current experiences with yoga.
What have been your experiences with yoga, historically, when you first began, and also presently?

Probes a: What led you to begin practicing yoga? What did it do for you?
Probes b: What kind of study and practice did you undertake in yoga?
Probes c: What about currently?
Probes d: Have you done any specific training and education involving yoga for mental health or counselling/psychotherapy integration?

Question 2: Exploring what led to integrating yoga in counselling/psychotherapy.
So what made you want to go into this work of integrating yoga into your therapy practice, and why?

Probes a: What helped prepare you for integrating yoga into counselling/psychotherapy?
Probes b: What are your views of Western and Eastern mental health approaches?
Probes c: What is your understanding of mental health and do you incorporate any traditional or Western elements in your understanding, please share?

Question 3: Describing what the practice of integration look like, and how it is done.
Can you tell me a bit about how you integrate yoga and Western counselling/psychotherapy, such as how the integration happens in your sessions?

Probes a: What elements of yoga do you bring into session?
Probes b: Can you give me an example of using this approach on client (keeping confidentiality)?
Probes c: What do you think helps doing this work of integration?

Question 4: Understanding the experiences of integrating yoga into counselling/psychotherapy.
What have been your experiences in this kind of integration work?

Probes a: Any challenges or limitations of doing this kind of integration work? If so, how did you address it?
Probes b: What do you think the benefits of doings this kind of work are for yourself, and for clients?

Question 5: Final thoughts and concluding remarks.
Where do you think the practice of yoga in counselling/psychotherapy is heading towards, what is its future in your opinion?

Probes a. Any last statements you want to address before concluding the interview?
Probes b: Anything you felt I could of asked in this interview that would be helpful to know?
Probes c: How was it like for you doing this interview today?
Appendix E

OLD INTERVIEW GUIDE

Question 1: Describing experiences with yoga,
What have been your experiences with yoga?

   Probes a: What led you to begin practicing yoga?
   Probes b: What kind of study and practice did you undertake in yoga?

Question 2: Describing what the practice of integration look like, and how it is done.
Can you tell me a bit about how your practice of integrating yoga into counselling/psychotherapy looks like?

   Probes a: What elements of yoga do you bring into session? Can you describe?
   Probes b: Can you give me an example, without any identifiable information, on using this approach for a client?

Question 3: Understanding the experiences of integrating yoga into counselling/psychotherapy.
What have been your experiences in this kind of integration work?

   Probes a: Any challenges of doing this kind of integration work? If so, how did you address them?

Question 4: Final thoughts and concluding remarks.
Where do you think the practice of yoga in psychotherapy is heading towards, what is its future in your opinion?

   Probes a: Any final thoughts on the practice of integration?
   Probes b: How was it like for you doing this interview today?
Appendix F

Participant Demographics

1. **Tejal** is trained in medicine and is a medical doctor (M.D.). She has done training in psychotherapy and is a registered psychotherapist. Tejal has been providing mental health services for over 7 years. Prior to her psychotherapy practice, Tejal was practicing emergency medicine and was in family medicine for over 10 years. Currently Tejal is a psychotherapist in private practice. In terms of her background training in yoga, Tejal is a certified yoga teacher and has undergone a Yoga Teacher training program. Tejal is also a certified Yoga Therapist and has undergone a certified yoga therapy training program. Tejal continues to engage in her yoga practices on a daily basis and expresses that it is an integral part of her lifestyle.

2. **Joseph** is a trained in medicine and is a medical doctor (M.D). Joseph has also done training in psychotherapy to become a registered psychotherapist. Joseph has been providing mental health services between 11-15 years. Prior to psychotherapy, Joseph was working as an emergency physician for over 20 years. Currently Joseph has a private psychotherapy practice. His prior education and training in yoga include 10 plus years practice of yoga, and attending yoga classes, workshops and courses that address both the foundations of yoga and yoga for mental health. Joseph has a regular yoga practice that he engages in daily.

3. **Meera** is trained in a Masters degree in Counselling Psychology (MA). She is a clinical and counselling psychologist. Meera has been practicing in the mental health field between 5-7 years. Meera has a part time private psychotherapy practice and also provides part time counselling and psychotherapy in hospital settings in mental health.
Her work history includes providing counselling and psychotherapy services in various counselling and community centers and health agencies. Meera is a certified yoga teacher, has undergone her certified yoga teacher training program, and also has experiences in Vapasana, Ayurveda and learning Sanksrit. Meera is also a Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapist, has undergone a Certified Phoenix Rising yoga therapy training program. Meera engages in an ongoing personal yoga practice.

4. **Chandra** is trained in psychodrama and is a certified psychodrama director. She provides counselling and psychotherapy services. She has been providing mental health services for approximately 11-15 years. In addition to her psychotherapy training, Chandra is also a Registered Massage therapist. Chandra works in private practice as a psychotherapist. Chandra has had several yoga training and educational experiences, such as attending yoga classes and workshops, and has over 20 years of personal experiences with yoga. Chandra continues to engage in a regular yoga practice.

5. **Melanie** has her Masters of Social Work (MWS), and is a registered social worker. She has been providing counselling and psychotherapy services between 11-15 years. Melanie currently works at a counselling center. Melanie has previously worked at other counselling centers and mental health agencies. Melanie is a certified yoga teacher. She is also trained in MBSR and Trauma Sensitive Yoga training program. Melanie actively continues to practice yoga and offers yoga classes.

6. **Ananda** is trained with an OPC (Ontario Psychotherapy and Counselling Program Diploma in Psychology). She has a Psychodynamic Therapy designation and is also a registered psychotherapist. Ananda has been providing mental health services between 8-10 years. Ananda has her own office space where she provides individual psychotherapy and also yoga therapy. Ananda is a certified yoga teacher and a Yoga
Therapist. She has taken the yoga teacher training program and a certified yoga therapist training program. Ananda continues to engage in the study and practice of yoga.

7. **Lilith** as her Certificate of Psychodynamic Studies (CTP) and a PhD in the area of Eastern psychology. Lilith is a registered psychotherapist and has been providing services between 8-10 years. Previous to her career as a psychotherapy, Lilith was teaching yoga classes and engaging in research on yoga and Eastern healing traditions. Lilith is a certified yoga teacher, has taken a yoga teacher training program, and is currently undergoing a certified yoga therapy training program. Lilith has extensively studied yoga scriptures, philosophy, Sanskrit, and yogic meditative practices. Lilith continues to have a regular practice of yoga.

8. **Alisa** as her Masters degree in Counselling Psychology (MEd). She is a Registered Clinical Counsellors and provides counselling and psychotherapy services. Alisa has between 5-7 years of practice in the mental health field. Alisa works in private practice. Her previous experiences include serving as a school teacher, and providing counselling and psychotherapy services in various counselling centers. Alisa is a certified yoga teacher, and a certified Yoga Therapist. Alisa has taken a yoga teacher training program, and a certified yoga therapy training program. She has also undergone training in the MBSR program and in Trauma-Informed Yoga training program. Alisa continues to make yoga a part of her life and has a dedicated daily yoga practice.

9. **Anna** has a Masters degree in Counselling Psychology (MA). She is a Certified Focusing trainer and a registered psychotherapist. Anna has been providing psychotherapy services for over 20 years. She currently works in private practice. Anna is a certified yoga teacher. Anna continues to have a daily practice of yoga.
Desiree has a Masters of Social Work Degree (MSW), and she is registered social worker as well as a clinical social worker. She has been providing psychotherapy and counselling services for over 20 years. Desiree works in private practice. She is a certified yoga teacher and a Yoga Therapist. She has taken a yoga teacher training program, and a certified yoga therapy training program. Desiree is also trained in MBSR. Desiree has an ongoing yoga practice.