

NAMASTE IN TEACHING: HOW YOGA PRACTICE AFFECTS NOVICE  
TEACHER RESILIENCE

by

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to all the teachers I had the privilege to serve alongside during my teaching career. Many of whom now serve as school principals and district administrators. May you never forget the struggle and always seek to offer solace and transparency about your experiences as a novice teacher. As teaching remains my family's business, this is also dedicated to my sister Selena, and my niece Sharron, who are both on the front lines of serving children in the classroom every day.

This work would not be possible without my research participants: Tree, Downward Facing Dog, Child's Pose I and II, Eagle, and Headstand. Thank you all for making time to talk to me about your experiences.

K-12 teachers often work tirelessly without acknowledgement, fair compensation, or validation from administrators, school districts, or even the communities they serve. Teachers: the work you do is invaluable to our children, but it cannot come at the cost of your mental and emotional well-being. I beg of you to take care of yourselves.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This phenomenological qualitative research study sought to understand how novice teachers perceive yoga practice as contributing to the development of resilience. The study's design illuminated the novice teachers experiences by providing in-depth reflection on how their yoga practice helped to navigate their novice teaching experience and contributed to their perceived resilience. This study adds to the existing body of knowledge on resilience and yoga by providing a different lens on how to use what we know about both of these, individually and collectively, to apply them to the novice teacher experience.

The research question guiding this study was: How do novice teachers view their yoga practice as contributing to resilience in the face of stressful teaching situations that might lead some to leave the profession? Data collection sources for this study included two 60-90 minute interviews with six novice teachers having no more than three years of full-time teaching experience, metaphorical representations of their teaching experience, and my researcher's journal. Moustaka's (1994) phenomenological data analysis method was employed as a data analysis protocol. Three themes emerged from this analysis 1) Reset, 2) Reflection, and 3) Non-Attachment. A conceptual framework was developed that considers teacher stress to lead to either two paths. In one direction that path leads to burnout, and as research tells us, contributes to 50% of teachers leaving the profession within the first five years. The other path offers a route to resilience through the practice of yoga. Findings from this study suggest that resilience is fostered in novice teachers

through the practice of yoga. Developing resilience in novice teachers can help to avoid the pitfalls of stress, burnout, and ultimately premature teacher turnover. Yoga practice helps teachers to reset from daily stressors and allow opportunities for them to be more reflective practitioners. Findings from the study will add to the research of adult education in regards to teacher preparation in particular alternative certification and ongoing professional development.

## I. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Teacher attrition has been a vastly studied phenomenon. Since national data has been available, teacher attrition rates have hovered around 8% over the last decade in comparison to other high-achieving countries around that world reporting half that number (Bennett et al., 2013). While that number may seem small in a workforce of 3.8 million, it translates to about 125,000 teachers leaving the profession annually (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). In a brief issued by the Alliance for Excellent Education (2008) it is estimated that within the span of five years, which is the average time it takes for a teacher to learn how maximize their students learning, half of all new teachers will have exited the profession.

Studies show that novice teachers are the most susceptible to leaving the classroom at alarming rates, causing Glazer (2018) to term those first few years the “survival period.” From 1988 to 2008 the rate of leaving for first year teachers saw an increase of 34% (Ingersoll et.al., 2014). Hence, this generation is seeing fewer career teachers as more teachers are not waiting until retirement to leave the profession than in the past. Of the total turnover rate, only 18% was due to retirement; 67% was represented by voluntary and preretirement turnover (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019).

The prevailing thought regarding how to address teacher attrition is to attract more teachers to the profession. However, figuring out ways to retain the teachers would provide a more viable solution. The main reasons cited by many for choosing teaching as a profession are the intrinsic rewards of making valuable contributions to society by working with children. These teachers arrive to the profession counting on the idea of building relationships with students and improving teaching and learning. The reality of

the classroom proves to be more challenging, and many are ill-prepared to deal with the emotional strain and stress of teaching. This causes their premature departure. A national study of support for new teachers found that taking comprehensive approaches towards teacher induction can reduce teacher turnover by more than 50 percent (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Perhaps equipping novice teachers with an induction program that prepares them to deal with the emotional strain and stress of teaching would prove beneficial in the effort to lower teacher attrition.

### **Background and Context**

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) reports that about 13 percent of the American workforce of 3.4 million public school teachers either moves (227, 016) or leaves (230,122) the profession each year. Ingersoll (2016), estimates that states spend between \$1 billion and \$2.2 billion a year on teacher attrition turnover. Adding to this expense is also the cost of recruiting and hiring new teachers to replace those that leave the classroom. It is not just a financial cost that is incurred either. Students pay an enormous cost in the lack of academic success when qualified teachers leave the profession prematurely. So considering the massive amount of teachers transitioning in and out of schools annually, this begs the question of what type of teachers are left to teach our children (NCTAF, 2007). Therefore, teacher turnover is a problem that we can no longer afford to ignore.

In his synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to student achievement, John Hattie (2009) developed a barometer to reflect what works and does not work in education; in other words, how to measure if an influence of instruction is effective (or detrimental) and by how much as it compares to other instructional alternatives. Among

teacher-controlled variables, the highest yields are associated with empathy, warmth, encouragement of higher order thinking, encouraging learning, adapting to differences, genuineness, and learner-centered beliefs. These vast research findings suggest that in order to improve student achievement teachers must be developed to harness the power of student-teacher relationships. In order to do this teachers must first learn to maneuver the stress that the job brings.

The teaching profession is one built on a relational context. Building relationships with students implies that a teacher understand what students, their culture, and their unique experiences contribute to the learning experience. Developing these relationships requires the skills of the teacher—skills that are not innate but instead are cultivated and honed over time. Further, previous research suggests that emotional practice and a culture of care should be embedded in schools and are decisive factors in the personal and professional development of new teacher identity formation, their well-being, and their willingness to stay in the profession (Asphors & Bondas, 2013). Consistent with the results of other studies, Asphors and Bondas found that implications for consideration include the need for teacher education to include preparing teachers with skills in handling relationships effectively with children and adults alike.

Many fail to see the humanistic values of teaching in as much as it needs to be developed. Lortie (1975) affirms this thought by expressing that teachers do 'people work' under somewhat special conditions. "The relationship is involuntary, the workers are less than fully socialized, and the teacher's actions are constrained by dealing with groups rather than individual students" (Lortie, 1975, p. 138). Forty-four years later we find ourselves still looking for solutions to these relational complexities Lortie

referenced. While research confirms that relationships are the cornerstone of learning, these complexities can also be a source of strain (Aspfors & Bondas, 2013). This strain that teachers endure often lead to stress—which studies conclude is not a temporary problem (Høigaard et al., 2012).

### **Problem Statement**

As many as 50% of teachers leave the profession within their first five years of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Even more alarming is that the highest rates of teacher attrition come within the first two years on the job (Glazer, 2018). While teachers are charged with carrying out the tasks of a highly emotional job, there is little that is done to prepare them to do so effectively. There is no doubt that teaching can be stressful, and left unmanaged, this stress often leads to the burnout that causes teachers to leave the profession prematurely. In addition, teachers who report being burned out are at increased risk of illness, both physical and mental, which results in a high level of absenteeism. When teachers are absent, classroom instruction is also absent. High rates of teacher burnout and the similar low overall quality of classroom instruction indicate the need for specialized professional development (Jennings et al., 2013). If our students are to thrive in the classroom, we need healthy teachers there to guide them on their educational journey. If teachers are healthy, they have a better chance to be (come) an effective teacher than not.

Giving teachers a tool that helps them develop the ability to ‘bounce back’ and respond to emotional stressors could make a positive change for novice teacher commitment to the profession. Resilient teachers develop a sense of efficacy that becomes essential to building the foundation of their professional identities. This sense of

efficacy has been shown to be an essential factor is teacher sustainability of commitment. By building resilience, novice teacher induction programs may reduce perceptions of role stressors and burnout while raising feelings of personal accomplishment (Richards et al., 2016). Teachers are expected to arrive to the profession with the ability to manage the emotional demands of teaching. However, a study conducted by Høigaard et al. (2012) concluded that professional mental readiness should be included as a topic in teacher education because research supports the need for managing emotional and motivational challenges in their professional career. Prolonged stress responses without the ability to manage those difficult situations can result in burnout (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Healthcare professionals are increasingly recommending yoga as an alternative to pharmacological treatments for stress (McCall et al., 2013). In recent years more attention has been given to the development of yoga and mindfulness-based programs for students, but research is largely nascent in regards to the benefits of providing this same intervention to the teachers that serve those students. What could this mean for school districts to give teachers a tool such as yoga to manage stress? Could this be one solution to teacher attrition? Will the skills learned in yoga help teachers to feel more resilient? Previous studies have explored the concepts of yoga, resilience, stress, burnout, and social-emotional competency as separate entities. This study sought to connect these concepts to explore the potential effectiveness of yoga practice within novice teacher induction programs. We wanted to know if giving them a strategy to manage their emotions and stress will increase teacher resiliency and thus improve their desire to remain in the profession.

## **Statement of Purpose and Research Question**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand how novice teachers perceive yoga practice as contributing to the development of resilience. If yoga is demonstrated to have a profound effect on perceived teacher resilience, then this becomes an implication for teacher professional developers to consider during the onboarding process. School districts need to address this deficiency in teachers by figuring out how they can implement yoga into new teacher development to best meet the needs through new teacher induction. Retaining teachers builds consistency in children's lives, which allows for better relationships to be formed, which in turn leads to the development of a well-trained teaching staff that is better equipped to help students achieve academic success. Using yoga to foster resilience in novice teachers may help to avoid the pitfalls of stress, burnout, and teacher turnover. The following research question was used to guide the study:

RQ: How do novice teachers view their yoga practice as contributing to resilience in the face of stressful teaching situations that might lead some to leave the profession?

## **Research Approach**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand how yoga practice contributes to the development of resilience in novice teachers. Phenomenology was chosen because it focuses on examining how individuals understand and makes sense of their lived experience. The participants selected for this study were K-12 novice teachers who practice yoga and have less than four years of teaching experience. Using criteria-based sampling along with snowball sampling, six participants

were solicited. Two semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 60-90 minutes in length were conducted with participants in areas and times that allow participants to be free from distractions. The purpose of conducting interviews is to understand the lived experience of others and to make meaning of that experience (Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2006; Smith, 2018; van Manen, 2017).

### **The Researcher**

After being hired as a classroom teacher, I left work and cried each day for the first three weeks of my teaching career. Although I had always wanted to be a teacher, I questioned my decision after being confronted with how difficult it was. No more were the compliant classrooms of my childhood. What was worse was that there was no one to offer assistance of any kind. There was not a program that existed that eased me into the career nor was I assigned a mentor. I saw many teachers leave the profession after they succumbed to feelings of defeat. This made me wonder how I was able to move beyond the tears to in order to develop effective and appropriate pedagogy. After being a classroom teacher for 11 years and working in education for 18 years, there is no study needed to convince me how difficult teaching is. I have felt it and lived it. I know it to be true.

Gradually, teaching became more manageable as I became more efficient in managing processes and the procedures in the classroom. While the stressors never waned I seemed to be able to balance them better once I developed pedagogical skills needed to be an effective teacher. However when I transitioned into my current role I again felt the overwhelming stress that I once experienced as a novice teacher. I was in a new role that required me to learn and understand the new responsibilities that the role

required. Shifting to this role meant that I went from being responsible for five classes to eight campuses. My responsibilities now included creating and executing action plans for struggling teachers, identifying instructional action steps in response to data, progress monitoring instructional programs and systems, and presenting a variety of district-wide professional development workshops to train teachers, instructional coaches, and principals.

Managing these responsibilities left me feeling like my brain was always in overdrive. It felt as if I was never off work, as I was constantly processing all the things I need to get done. After reading about the claims of relaxation that were advertised for a yoga class I decided that I would give it a try. For the first time in a long time I was able to quiet my mind and focus solely on what I was doing in that moment. This one class led to many more and it fueled a desire in me to learn more about how I can use the skills taught in yoga to bring me some mental peace and clarity on a daily basis.

As my current role includes the responsibility of novice teacher training it often causes me to reflect on my own novice teacher experience. As I began this research I could not help but think about how my transition into teaching could have been easier had I known about the benefits that yoga provides for stress relief. As I struggle to understand how I managed to survive the stressors of the classroom when so many others around me did not, I am encouraged to help find at least one solution to our nationwide problem of teacher turnover. The cumulative price of attrition is high and includes both financial and educational cost. Teacher turnover causes a multitude of problems that ultimately manifest themselves in student achievement.

## **Rationale and Significance**

Much of student success is dependent on a teacher's ability to navigate the plethora of emotions they encounter daily. Teachers are regularly involved in emotionally provocative situations and without training on how to handle them often buckle under the stress (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Resilience has proven crucial to understanding how some teachers cope with hardship while others succumb to the challenges of their work lives (Richards et al., 2016). We must retain teachers in order to close the achievement gap. The idea is not just to retain teachers for the sake of retaining them but instead is about having passionate and effective teachers available to help meet the needs of our students. Aguilar (2018) charges that leaders need to provide teachers with the needed resources to meet the challenges they are sure to encounter in their work. This study addressed novice teacher experience using yoga in hopes to look at how novice teacher induction programs can be designed in the future to retain teachers. This study addressed the teacher stress issue by studying how yoga affects their job stressors.

As an adult educator concerned with the retention and professional development of beginning teachers, I see the potential for a better understanding of the impact of yoga practice leading to the development of professional development programs that may help beginning teachers manage the stress of teaching that leads to burnout, and in many cases departure, of capable teachers who might make a difference in the lives of students.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

***Asana***. An asana is a body posture, originally sitting for meditation, and later in hatha yoga and modern yoga, including reclining, standing, inverted, twisting, or balancing as well as seated poses (Simpkins & Simpkins, 2014).

**Attrition.** Percentage of teachers at a given level of education leaving the profession in a given school year (Fry, 2010).

**Burnout.** A work-related syndrome that stems from an individual's perception of a significant discrepancy between effort and reward (Dali & Bakar, 2016).

**Eudaimonia.** Eudaimonia means achieving the best conditions possible for a human being, in every sense—not only happiness, but also virtue, morality, and a meaningful life (Sullivan et al., 2018).

**Meditation.** A purposeful relation of the mind through disassociation of thoughts and/or concentration on one's own breathing (Desai et al., 2015).

**Mindfulness.** An approach to life, a way of orienting yourself with alert awareness and complete presence (Simpkins & Simpkins, 2014). This study is bounded by a focus on yoga. There is a more expansive, parallel literature on mindfulness, which is not the focus of this study, while some literature referring to mindfulness is incorporated.

**Novice Teacher.** Those with fewer than four years of teaching experience. For the purpose of this study, it included teachers with 0-3 years of teaching experience (Howard & Johnson, 2004).

**Pranayama Meditation.** Meditation focused on controlled breathing techniques that cultivate stillness and quiet the mind (Hepburn & McMahon, 2017).

**Resilience.** The ability to adjust to various situations and increase one's competence in the face of adverse conditions. Often described as the ability to recover in the face of challenges. (Castro et al., 2010; Day & Hong, 2016; Gu & Day, 2007).

**Social-Emotional Competence (SEC).** Defined as having five major emotional, cognitive, and behavioral competencies: self-awareness, social awareness, responsible

decision making, self-management, and relationship management (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

***Stress.*** The body's response to any demand placed upon it to adapt (Dali & Bakar, 2012).

***Yoga.*** A mind-body practice that consists of various types of practices that can influence muscle tone and posture as well as attention, affect, and cognition (Simpkins & Simpkins, 2014; Sullivan et al., 2018). The literature presented here focused on using yoga as an intervention had three components common in all forms of yoga; controlled breathing (pranayama), physical postures (asanas), and meditation (dhyana) (Desai et al., 2015; Pascoe & Bauer, 2015).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study sought to examine how yoga practice shapes the experiences of novice teachers and shapes perceived resiliency. In doing so, I reviewed literature closely related to several issues surrounding this topic. The chapter is divided into four sections: (a) teacher stress and burnout, (b) teacher resilience, (c) social-emotional competence of teachers and (d) yoga.

Teaching involves the daily management of challenging situations all while attempting to balance responsibilities to students, parent, colleagues, and administration. Balancing these responsibilities along with the individual needs of students, as well as managing relationships with parents and colleagues can sometimes prove to be an overwhelming experience. As new teachers enter into the profession and try to overcome these challenges, they experience what Caspersen and Raaen (2014) describe as 'reality shock.' It is because of this 'reality shock' that novice teachers are more susceptible to the burnout and stress that leads to turnover (p. 189). Teachers are regularly involved in emotionally provocative situations and without training on how to handle them often buckle under the stress (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Much of student success is dependent on a teacher's ability to navigate the plethora of emotions they encounter daily. While teachers are charged with carrying out the tasks of a highly emotional job, there is little that is done to prepare them to do so effectively. There is no doubt that teaching can be stressful and if unmanaged, this stress more likely leads to burnout and possibly teachers leaving the profession prematurely (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Much research has been done on the need and curriculum development for social-emotional learning (SEL) and development for students but

concern for the study of teacher well-being as a necessity for effective classrooms is just on the horizon.

While teachers often are not able to control the various stressful encounters they face, resilience can be better equip them to handle such situations. Research indicates that resilience may be the tool that equips teachers to cope with the stressors they experience and reduce the feeling of burnout (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Jennings & Greenburg, 2009; Richards et al., 2016; Tait, 2008).

As this study has evolved, I have conducted numerous searches in the university library database using the following terms in various pairings: resilience, emotional resilience for classroom teachers, teacher resilience, resiliency development in adult learning, social-emotional competence, social-emotional learning, teacher turnover, attrition, self-efficacy, yoga for resilience, emotional competence, teacher stress, burnout, yoga for stress management, mindfulness, teacher retention, personal efficacy, self-efficacy, and yoga therapy. Most of these studies were specific to include K-12 teachers and were found in education journals, social science journals, social psychology, and yoga studies books and manuals.

### **Teacher Stress and Burnout**

Dali and Bakar (2012) define stress as the body's response to any demand placed upon it to adapt (p. 2). They continue by explaining that there are three types of stress: eustress, and neutress, and distress. Eustress, or euphoric stress, is used to describe elation often referred to as positive stress that we may feel under moderate and temporary stressful situations—such as giving an acceptance speech or a presentation at work. Neutral stress, or neutress, is a term used to describe stressful situations that have neither

a positive or negative impact. An example of neutral stress could be a disturbing world news event. While the event may bring you stress, you may not be directly impacted. Distress is what is often being referred to when people talk about people experiencing stress (Dali & Bakar, 2012). Distress is the most common form of stress, and it occurs when a person is being forced into or lacks control of a situation, unable to resolve a situation, or lack resources to deal with the situation.

While all stress is not bad, many situations that novice teachers commonly face result in them experiencing negative stress. In a mixed-methods research study conducted by Dali and Bakar (2012), 22 participants responded to the Stress Resilience Test (SRT) designed to measure personal resilience in stressful situations followed by interviews with selected participants. The findings of this study confirmed that novice teachers agreed that the first year of teaching is very challenging for the majority of new teachers. Using results from the SRT the most stressful factors were identified as classroom management and discipline, dealing with individual student problems, extracurricular activities, clerical work, assessment and evaluation, insufficient materials and supplies, probationary teacher evaluation, heavy teaching load, motivation of students, insufficient preparation time, and dealing with parents (Dali & Bakar, 2012).

Prilleltensky et al. (2016) contends that stress is an imbalance between risk and protective factors. Risk factors are characteristics of a person or system that increase the chances of negative outcomes for a person. On the contrary, protective factors are attributes of a person or system that increase the likelihood of positive outcomes for the person or system. Prilleltensky et al. (2016) illuminates risk factors by categorizing them at the personal, interpersonal, and organizational levels. Those risk factors at the personal

level include isolation, inadequacy, and anxiety. At the interpersonal level, those risk factors are parents and colleagues, while disempowering policies and practices and role clarification are among the risk factors at the organizational level.

Any effort to reduce stress must also seek to increase protective factors. To counter those risk factors listed in their research, Prilleltensky et al. offered a list of 23 protective factors in response. Their list included needs as identified from novice teachers in their first three years of work. Among those needs mentioned were to have formal and informal opportunities to discuss ideas with their colleagues, opportunities to contextualize and find solutions to their everyday teaching problems, and emotional support and guidance without fear of negative professional evaluations. Also among those protective factors listed are engagement in well-being activities, acceptance, and mindful meditation (Prilleltensky et al., 2016).

In their quantitative study, Wang et al. (2015) expanded on previous research and adds to what we learn from Prilleltensky et al. (2016) by evaluating the role that intrapersonal attributions play in mediating one's stress as a teacher. They hypothesized that teachers who attribute their stress to factors that are less personally controllable have higher burnout, lower job satisfaction, more illness symptoms, and a higher tendency to quit. Questionnaire measures were used to assess teachers' causal attributions for occupational stress, psychological adjustment (which included job satisfaction and burnout), illness symptoms, and quitting intentions. The results of this study provided clear support of the authors' hypothesis in that these teachers reported higher levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and illness symptoms, as well as a higher likelihood of quitting the teaching profession. Having teachers assume responsibility for

things that cause them stress without giving them tools to manage and reduce that stress can prove detrimental. Ignoring the stress that novice teachers inevitably encounter does not serve teacher retention. An implication presented as a recommendation for the future included equipping teachers with both motivational and instructional strategies for dealing with stress. It implicates the need for programs that promote perceptions of value and control that lead to teachers' well-being (Prilleltensky et al., 2016).

Several factors contribute to stress that emerges for novice teachers. Some common elements that contribute to novice teacher stress are isolation, loneliness, low self-confidence, lack of competence, out-of-field teaching assignments, and working conditions are listed among many (Dali & Bakar, 2012; Prilleltensky et al., 2016). Beginning teachers are required to make many life adjustments in order to fulfill the obligations that accompany their new role. Many report feelings of isolation as they are often left to cope on their own in their classrooms. Sometimes the pressure of having to fulfill these obligations coupled with not having the perceived skills necessary to do so creates stress. The stress of novice teachers if left unaddressed can lead to anxiety and eventually teacher burnout. Dali and Bakar (2016) suggest that burnout is the last phase in a series of unsuccessful attempts to cope with a variety of conditions.

Burnout is defined as a work-related syndrome that stems from an individual's perception of a significant discrepancy between effort and reward (Dali & Bakar, 2016). Burnout factors can include lack of social support, classroom discipline and control, personal self-concept, administrative pressure, difficult parents, role conflict and ambiguity, and isolation. While burnout factors mimic risk factors and common stressors, this can cause teachers to perceive the lack of ability to improve these stressful factors

therefore leaving the profession altogether. Teachers could be leaving the classroom before realizing their full potential. We will never know whom those teachers would have become "if they had been adequately encouraged, supported, and prepared for these stresses during those first years of teaching" (Dali & Bakar, 2016).

A substantial amount of literature points to the benefit of using a mentoring program for novice teachers to help them process how teachers experience the profession as it relates to stress. Mentor programs seek to establish formal relationships between beginning teachers and experienced teachers. Jones and Youngs (2012) note that empirical evidence regarding mentoring programs' effectiveness has been mixed. They point out that relying on formal mentor programs ignores the informal role that other colleagues have in the socialization of novice teachers. These informal interactions with colleagues can also be met with disdain and could potentially result in the presentation of stressful factors. Individuals experience stress differently and their experiences with colleagues shape their momentary emotional responses to their work environment. Individuals vary in their response to negative interactions with colleagues; some may compartmentalize the interaction while others may linger on it (Jones & Youngs, 2012).

In a quantitative study Jones and Youngs (2012), supported the hypothesis that daily emotional experiences are an apparent predictor of attitudes about work. Their results also indicated that positive emotional experiences are associated with teachers' plans to stay in teaching. Considering that emotions experienced in teaching are not static and can be experienced differently from person to person—a static fix in that of a formal mentor program is not enough. Prilleltensky et al. (2016) caution that too many mentor programs consist of random pairings of novice and veteran teachers and also lack formal

guidelines and objectives. While Caspersen and Raaen (2014) contend that teachers who report having an ability to cope with their work are better suited as mentors, random pairings make this point moot. If mentor programs lack the formality of expectations, follow-up, and accountability, their true effectiveness will go unknown.

### **Teacher Resilience**

The idea of resilience originated in the disciplines of psychiatry and developmental psychology as a result of attempting to understand why some children, who are classified as at risk, thrive and others do not (Gu & Day, 2007). Resilience is defined as the ability to adjust to various situations and increase one's competence in the face of adverse conditions. It is often described as the ability to 'bounce back,' to recover in the face of challenges. (Castro et al., 2010; Day & Hong, 2016; Gu & Day, 2007). Resilience is believed to fuel teachers with the capacity to reduce role stressors such as role conflict, role overload, and role ambiguity (Richards et al., 2016). The conversation signified a paradigm shift from deficit to asset thinking around the ability to adapt positively and thrive in spite of hardships.

In a four-year-long mixed-methods study conducted by Gu and Day (2007), 300 teachers were recruited to participate in hopes to gain a better understanding of resilience in teacher effectiveness. The conceptual framework upon which the Gu and Day (2007) study was built was Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. Once thought of as being an innate characteristic, research later confirmed that resilience is a construct that is relative and that resilient qualities can be learned or acquired. Teachers' personal lives and working contexts can become unstable in unpredictable ways. Giving teachers a tool such as resilience helps them to respond positively to these challenging

dynamics they encounter early in their career. Their findings suggest that teacher resilience is a necessary condition for teacher effectiveness. Resilient teachers' sense of efficacy, professional and personal identities and their ability to manage challenging experiences helps them to sustain their motivation, commitment, and effectiveness in the profession (Gu & Day, 2007).

Three main reasons are given as to why resilience is essential in teaching. First, if we expect students to be resilient, we need their teachers to serve as role models in this capacity. Second, shifting the focus from burnout to resilience is an essential factor in teacher sustainability of commitment. Third, being able to recover speaks to a sense of agency and motivation that promotes achievement in all aspect of students' lives (Gu & Day, 2007).

Resilience itself is a psychological construct which posits that positive emotions fuel psychological resilience. Gu and Day (2007) continue by describing the close relation of Social-Emotional Competence (SEC) to resilience by referencing it as "a strong sense of vocation, self-efficacy, and motivation". Building upon previous studies that contend that what keep teachers going is the "emotional stuff" (Gu & Day, 2007). Tait (2008) contends that resilience is also linked to and predicated upon emotional intelligence. The emotional capacity needed by teachers in order to develop resiliency requires a sustained engagement that necessitates authentic caring relationships be established with students. This is especially the case when dealing with students whose behavior is exceptionally challenging. Students who have experienced emotional turmoil or traumatic relationships require more effort to connect with than others. Likewise, Day and Hong (2016) contend that students' well-being, progress, and development in schools

that are resource-poor are likely to be heavily dependent on their teachers' commitment to caring for and about them.

By building resilience, novice teacher induction programs may reduce perceptions of role stressors and burnout while raising feelings of personal accomplishment (Richards et al., 2016). According to Jennings and Greenburg (2009) teachers who experience frequent negative emotions may also experience a lack of motivation and a reduced sense of self-efficacy. Conversely, teachers who regularly experience more positive emotions may be more resilient.

### **Social-Emotional Competence of Teachers**

Over the past twenty years, multiple surveys have indicated that educators and parents alike recognize the need to enhance students' social-emotional competence in addition to improving academic performance (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In order to achieve this, teachers must be similarly equipped with the skills necessary to provide this type of instruction for students. Socially and emotionally competent teachers are at the foundation of providing this instruction to students. Those teachers set the tone for students by developing supportive relationships which promote intrinsic motivation. Bandura contends that "the people with whom one regularly associates delimit the types of behavior that will be repeatedly observed and hence learned most thoroughly" (1977, p. 24). These teachers then, serve as role models for their students, and they become the best facilitators in showing them how to navigate their ever-changing adolescent emotions.

Jennings and Greenberg (2009) define social-emotional competence (SEC) as having five major emotional, cognitive, and behavioral competencies: self-awareness,

social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management, and relationship management. Teachers do not arrive at the profession with these skills. They must be cultivated in order to pass those traits on to students. When teachers are not explicitly taught how to manage the emotional demands of teaching students pay the price of their ineffectiveness.

The prosocial classroom model was conceptualized to help illustrate the transactional relationship that naturally occurs in a classroom. A healthy and functioning classroom environment contributes to students' social, emotional, and academic outcomes. In turn, this improvement contributes to the teachers' enjoyment of teacher, perceived efficacy, and thus commitment to the profession. This creates a positive feedback loop illustrated in the model. This bidirectional relationship model (see Figure 1) describes how the teachers' SEC and well-being have a direct effect on healthy student-teacher relationships, effective classroom management, and effective social and emotional instruction implementation (Jennings & Greenburg, 2009, p. 494). Those factors then create a healthy classroom environment which in turn manifests in positive academic outcomes for students.

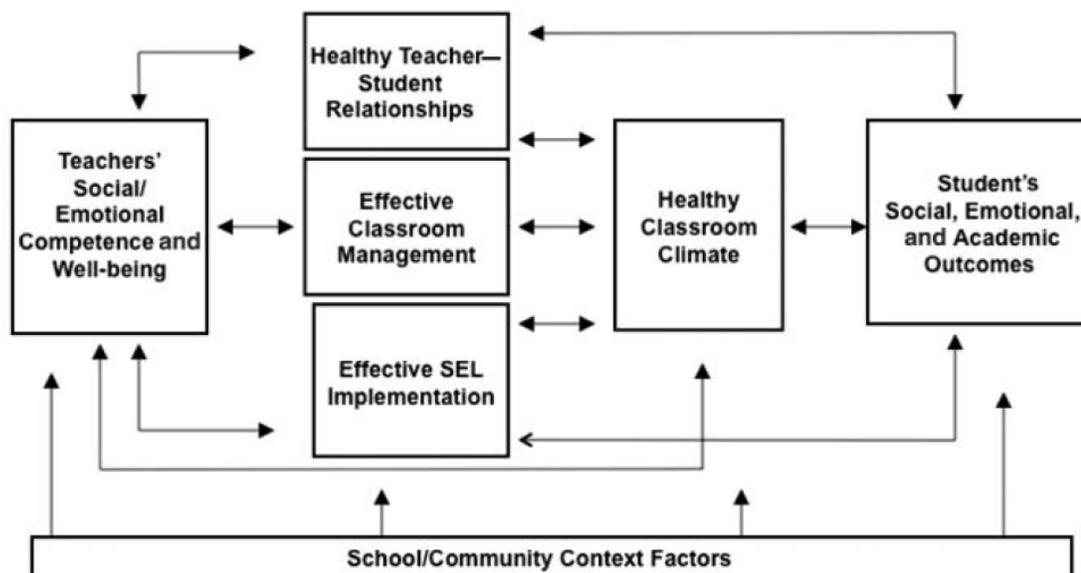


FIGURE 1. *The Prosocial Classroom Model*. From “The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes,” by P.A. Jennings and M. T. Greenburg, 2009, *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), p. 494 (<https://doi-org./10.3102/0034654308325693>). Copyright 2009 by Sage Publications.

When teachers are unable to effectively manage the social and emotional challenges, children tend to show lower levels of on-task behavior and performance. This creates an environment that disrupts the flow of teaching and learning and causes adverse effects triggering stress. Prolonged stress responses without the ability to manage these difficult situations can result in what Jennings and Greenberg (2009) refer to as the "burnout cascade." This burnout cascade is marked by the classroom environment becoming increasingly difficult to manage with student misbehaviors increasing. As teachers attempt to manage those problematic behaviors, they tend to resort to reactive measures which often are punitive. These punitive responses fail to teach self-regulation and continue the cycle of classroom dysfunction.

Developing healthy student-teacher relationships are essential in maintaining a functioning classroom environment with limited behavior disruptions. Those

relationships begin with teachers who are socially and emotionally competent and thus better equipped to respond to student's individual needs. For example, if a teacher understands that a student's challenging behavior results from problems faced outside of school, they may better empathize and demonstrate greater effort in trying to teach the student how to self-regulate as opposed to quickly resorting to punitive corrective action. Poor relationships with teachers can lead students to dislike and even develop a fear of school which over time can lead to disengagement and disconnection from the school community. Correlational studies provide suggestive evidence that children's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral difficulties are in some cases linked to conflicted relationships with their teachers (Houts et al., 2010).

Teachers higher in SEC are also more likely to demonstrate more effective classroom management skills because they can sense the changing of emotions and can react to them. Proactive and skillful in their responses, socially emotionally competent teachers are often more positive in their interactions and are skillful in guiding and managing student behaviors. These teachers take note of the bigger picture and seek to look beyond the misbehavior of students and take note of the antecedents. They notice the emotional dynamics that cause a situation and respond to both sets of behaviors, taking away any scapegoats.

Teachers who are high in SEC are better equipped to present a socially and emotionally responsive curriculum and model socially and emotionally responsive behavior. They show their students first-hand how to manage their emotions even when situations become challenging. These teachers recognize how their emotional expressions factor into the development of the students and ultimately affect their ability to positively

impact the learning experience. Establishing and maintaining positive, productive relationships with children requires significant effort—skills that must be explicitly taught to novice teachers. Too much is at stake when teachers are assumed to arrive at the profession having already possessing the skills that support positive relationship building (Houts et al., 2009).

### **Yoga for Teachers**

The word yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root *yuj* meaning to bind, join, attach, and yoke. Likewise, yoga aims to yoke the mind to the body. Yoga is one of six orthodox systems of Indian philosophy. While many Westerners know yoga only as poses, or asanas, there is much more to it than that. The philosophy was systematized by Patanjali and categorized into what is known as the Eight Limbs of Yoga. Limbs 1 and 2 (yamas and niyamas) prepare you for practice and focuses on changing your mental attitude to live a moral life. Limb 3 (asanas) involves the posture of the body. The first three stages of yoga are outward expressions of the practice. The next two stages are inward quests as aspirants are tasked to focus on their breathing (pranayama and pratyahara). The last three stages of yoga (dharana, dhyana, and samadhi) involve going within oneself exercising deep concentration and meditation (Iyengar, 1966).

While yoga is not a religious practice, it is rooted within Hinduism. Buddha is seen to be the creator of mindfulness as we know it to be and was also a yoga practitioner. While he did not accept all of the yoga principles he did incorporate them in his religion, Buddhism (Simpkins & Simpkins, 2014). Much of Buddhist meditation practices stem from yoga which is where the yoga and mindfulness connection may be birthed from. In recent literature, the term meditation is used more often than yoga even

though meditation is a part of yoga. While yoga as a whole represents several parts, Western texts have seemed to extrapolate meditation and use it interchangeably with the term mindfulness. Yoga *includes* mindfulness practice in which attention is focused on the breath and body movement, poses, and alignment (Mendelson et al., 2013). The review of literature presented here focuses on using yoga as an intervention having three components common in all forms of yoga; controlled breathing (pranayama), physical postures (asanas), and meditation (dhyana) (Desai et al., 2015; Pascoe & Bauer, 2015).

According to Sullivan et al. (2018), yoga is a process that contributes towards eudaimonic well-being in the experience of pain, illness, and disability. In their article, a model of yoga that is connected to *polyvagal theory* (PVT) is proposed to provide a neurophysiological explanation of the methods and techniques embedded in yoga practice. This theory connects the autonomic nervous system to the expression of emotional and social behavior. PVT is viewed as the neurophysiological counterpart of yogic concepts and ways of being. Sullivan et al. (2018) considers yoga a mind-body practice that consists of various types of methods that can influence muscle tone and posture as well as attention, affect, and cognition. Like other mind-body practices, yoga calls for simultaneous focused attention to the body, intentional breathing, and overall awareness. There are three polyvagal neural platforms that exist. PVT posits that it is through these neural platforms that physiological states, psychological attributes, and social processes are connected. Thus yoga, as a mind-body practice, makes these changes accessible to the individual.

The ventral vagal complex (VVC) supports the social engagement system. When it detects safety (both internally and externally) the VCC supports prosocial behavior and

social connection. The motor component of the VCC regulates and coordinates the muscles of the face and head with the bronchi and heart. It is that connection that helps individuals foster human connections and allows for more flexible responses to challenging social interactions. The sympathetic nervous system (SNS) is frequently referred to as the fight or flight response. It is where the initial and primary defense strategies are recruited. The SNS mobilizes physiological responses that include inhibition of gastrointestinal function, increased heart and respiratory rates, and the shunting of blood from the periphery. Psychological attributes of the SNS manifest as emotions of fear or anger that are summoned for protection for the individual. The dorsal vagal complex (DVC) physiological responses include a dramatic reduction of cardiac output to reserve metabolic resources. Activation of the DVC is often associated with immobilization or behaviorally shutting down (Sullivan et al., 2018).

Yoga practices focus on attentional and affective regulation and cognition. Sullivan et al. (2018) asserts that resilience happens when we teach people to access the ventral vagal pathways with processes that facilitate attention regulation, affective processing, and flexibility of physiological systems that help them to respond to their environment. “The capacity to discern, alter reactivity, and even to hold a positive attitude in the presence of activation offers an important resource...” (Sullivan et al., 2018, p. 11). Thus, yoga becomes a means of “exercising” these neural platforms to help build resilience—A practice of safe mobilization and safe immobilization.

Neurobiological changes are measured in various ways and allow conclusions to be made about brain functioning especially where yoga is concerned. Structural changes of the brain are measured and examined by positron emission tomography (PET), single-

photon emission, single-photon emission computed tomography, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), electroencephalogram (EEG), functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), diffusion tensor imaging, and magnetization prepared rapid gradient echo (Desai et al., 2015; Jindal et al., 2013; Lazar et al., 2005; McCall et al., 2013).

Different aspects of yoga practices have been demonstrated to produce changes in the brain (Desai et al., 2015; Lazar et al., 2005; Simpkins & Simpkins, 2014). For example, meditative practices (dhyana) have been measured by electroencephalogram (EEG) and have shown distinct effects on the brain. Focus and breathing meditations, in which an individual's attention is concentrated on one thing, have been linked to increases in gamma and beta brain waves (Simpkins & Simpkins, 2014). Gamma and beta waves are responsible for conscious awareness, mood, and emotions, as well as increases in cognitive skills (Desai et al., 2015; Simpkins & Simpkins, 2014).

Open-focus and no-focus meditations, in which the object of focus is continually changing or absent of focus, have been linked to an increase in theta and alpha waves. Alpha waves are correlated to cognitive performance and an increased perception of calmness. Additionally, a positive correlation between fast and accurate memory performance exists with alpha brain waves. Theta waves correlate with relaxed attention, creativity, tranquility, and restful alertness. When stimulated, theta waves function similarly to alpha waves and have been shown to reduce anxiety. (Desai et al., 2015; Simpkins & Simpkins, 2014).

In a study conducted by Lazar et al. (2005) twenty meditation practitioners were recruited to test the hypothesis that regular meditation practice would result in significant

changes in the cortical structure in regions engaged during the mental exercise. Their data indicated that regular practice of meditation is associated with increased thickness of the insular cortex, an area responsible for empathy, compassion, fairness, and cooperation (p. 1895). In a later study conducted by Tang et al. (2010) 45 undergraduate students were randomized to an integrative body-mind training (IMBT) or relaxation group for 11 hours of training to complete 30-minute sessions over one month. Brain images were taken before and after training to measure the physiological and brain changes. The cingulate gyrus, a node where moods and emotions are regulated was affected by meditation and thus the meditation group was better able to regulate emotional reactions than those in the relaxation group (Simpkins & Simpkins, 2014; Tang et al., 2010). Tang et al. (2009) also found that structural changes in the brain occur after periods of short-term meditation as well. Their study findings indicate that after five days of meditation training the white matter connectivity increased between the front part of the cingulate gyrus and other structures of the brain (Simpkins & Simpkins, 2014; Tang et al. 2009).

Using teachers as participants in another study, Hepburn and McMahon (2017) sought to establish whether pranayama meditation (yoga breathing) reduced the perceived level of stress. Purposeful homogeneous sampling was used to identify full-time teachers with more than five years of teaching experience who had worked in more than one school during their career. Participants reported a decrease in perceived stress, felt more in control of their emotions, and better able to focus (Hepburn & McMahon, 2017).

An asana-based practice is what is thought of as yoga practice in Western culture. This recreational exercise has been found to have positive effects on cardiorespiratory health, an increase of physical fitness, and decreased resting heart rate and blood

pressure. Yoga postures (asanas) were also found to increase levels of the neurotransmitter gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) in the brain. Reduced activity in GABA systems has been found in mood and anxiety disorders. An increase in GABA activity is typically achieved by pharmacologic agents (Streeter et al., 2010). In a pilot study conducted by Streeter et al. (2007), researchers sought to compare changes in the brain in  $\gamma$ -aminobutyric (GABA) levels associated with a yoga session compared to a reading session. The participants were randomized into two groups; one group comprised of eight yoga practitioners and the other 11 comparison subjects. The yoga practitioners in the study completed a 60-minute yoga session and the other a 60-minute reading session. There was a 27% increase in GABA levels in the yoga practitioner group while no change was found in the participants from the reading group. Given reading is not a comparable physical exercise one may be left wondering how the brain responds to yoga in comparison to another form of physical exercise.

In a follow-up study, Streeter et al. (2010) conducted another study that addressed the question of whether changes in mood, anxiety and GABA levels are specific to yoga or related to physical activity. Participants were 18-45 years old and in generally good health. Participants were excluded if they had participated in any yoga practice in the previous three months; or currently participated in psychotherapy, prayer groups, or any other mind-body disciplines. Subjects were also excluded if they presented with any neurological disorder that could compromise their health or scan data, received treatment within the last three months with medication that could affect GABA levels, or used of tobacco and alcohol products within that period since they are also known to effect GABA levels. Randomized into two groups, 34 participants were chosen to participate in

a 12-week long intervention three times a week for 60 minutes each; yoga subjects (n=19) and the walking group (n=15).

Two scales were used to test mood and anxiety over time. Mood was assessed using the Exercise Induced Feeling Inventory (EIFI); anxiety was assessed using the State scale of the Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI). The two scales were administered before each scan and before the first intervention to assess baseline measures. They were given again after the completion of sessions at weeks 4, 8 and 12. The results showed positive correlations between improved mood and decreased anxiety and thalamic GABA levels for the yoga group greater than the metabolically matched walking group. This suggests that the positive effects on mood and anxiety are not achieved with metabolically matched exercise and is specific to that of yoga. This was the first study of its kind to demonstrate increased levels of thalamic GABA levels with improved mood and anxiety levels (Streeter et al., 2010).

A similar study was conducted by Rocha et al. (2012) that examined participants who practiced yoga and exercised compared to those who only exercised. Salivary cortisol analysis indicated that yoga practice was effective in reducing this physiological parameter indicative of stress levels. Previous studies indicate that high levels of cortisol correlate to impaired working memory when exposed to social stressors. The results were similar to previous studies mentioned showing reduced parameters related to depression and anxiety, as well as improved performance in recognition memory tasks (Rocha et al., 2012).

An explanatory framework was developed by Streeter et al. (2012) that attributes the benefits of yoga to the reduction of the effects of stress-related allostatic load on the

autonomic and GABA systems. Yoga as a treatment was found to stimulate an underactive parasympathetic nervous system and increase the inhibitory action of a hypoactive GABA system. These brain pathways are critical for threat perception, emotion regulation, and stress reactivity (Streeter et al., 2012).

In a case-control study conducted by Nosaka and Okamura (2015) 90 school employees were recruited to participate in assessing the effects of their daily practice of a yoga therapy program learned during a single session of an integrated yoga intervention program. All participants attended a 3-hour stress management workshop that included yogic teachings and practice. After completing the workshop participants were encouraged to continue with the yogic teachings learned by practicing it daily. Three months after the intervention, two groups were categorized by how often they practiced. One group consisted of the participants who practiced more than three days a week for the previous three months (DP group= 43). The other group had practiced the program on 2 or fewer days each week (NDP group= 47). After three months of a single weekly session of integrated yoga therapy program subjects showed significant increases in their levels of calmness, comfort, and cheerfulness while showing decreases in cognitive mind and body stress (Nosaka & Okamur, 2015).

This collection of literature regarding yoga's effect on brain functioning deserves attention as we look for solutions in helping novice teachers overcome the emotional strain and stressful barriers of the profession. As school districts across the nation consider ways to retain current teachers, yoga could become a viable solution for helping teachers to build the resilience they need to become effective teachers. Yoga has been proven to have numerous and vast effects on brain functioning that could benefit novice

teachers in a profound way. In recent years 1.44 million people were prescribed yoga by their doctor for a variety of health issues (Pascoe & Bauer, 2015). Perhaps yoga can be the prescription for novice teacher resilience—that helps to resist the emotional strain and stress of teaching.

### **Conceptual Framework**

According to Maxwell (2005) the conceptual framework is “the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories that supports and informs your research” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 39). Miles and Huberman (1994) define the conceptual framework as a visual or written product that explains in graphic or narrative form the key factors, concepts, or variables to be studied and the relationships between them. A combination of stress and resilience were used as lenses for this study.

Figure 2 is a visual representation of how I conceptualized stress and resilience in this study, with yoga acting as a potential mediator. Novice teachers are almost without exception surrounded by stressors—none of which are more important than the other. This amalgamation of stress forces teachers to respond to them. This graphic shows an interruption of stress that can go in different directions. On one end of this interruption, the novice teacher folds under the pressures of stress leading them to burnout. On the other end, yoga practice interrupts these stressors by giving novice teacher tools to help counter the impact of stressors. By choosing yoga as their response to stress, novice teachers are building the resilience that helps them navigate challenging situations that cause stress. These teachers learn to neutralize the stressors by continuing in this cycle since the stressors remain ever present. The ability to rely on their own skills to create a

balance with job stressors allows novice teachers to start building self-efficacy at the beginning of their career.

## Stress

Dali and Bakar (2012) define stress as the body's response to any demand placed upon it to adapt (p. 2). Stress occurs when a person is being forced into or lacks control of a situation, unable to resolve a situation, or lack resources to deal with the situation. Research conducted by Dali and Bakar (2012) identified common stressors of novice teachers as classroom management and discipline, dealing with individual student problems, extracurricular activities, clerical work, assessment and evaluation, insufficient materials and supplies, probationary teacher evaluation, heavy teaching load, motivation of students, insufficient preparation time, and dealing with parents (Dali and Bakar, 2012).

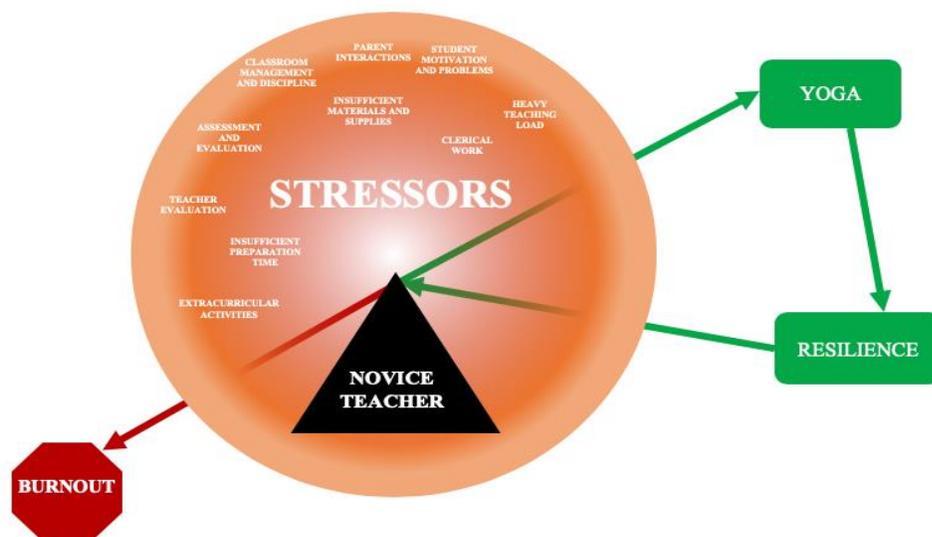


FIGURE 2. *Conceptual Framework*

While stressors in teaching are persistent, responses to stress becomes the deciding factor of what becomes of that stress. Prilleltensky et al. (2016) hypothesized that teachers who attribute their stress to factors that are less personally controllable have higher burnout, lower job satisfaction, more illness symptoms, and a higher tendency to quit. In other words, teachers need to have tools readily available to them to deal with the stress they are bound to encounter at the beginning of their teaching career. Knowing novice teachers will invariably encounter stress and failing to prepare them with tools to manage and reduce that stress can prove harmful. This conceptual framework suggests that ignoring the stress that novice teachers inevitably encounter can lead to teacher burnout.

Burnout is defined as a work-related syndrome that stems from an individual's perception of a significant discrepancy between effort and reward (Dali & Bakar, 2016). Burnout factors can include lack of social support, classroom discipline and control, personal self-concept, administrative pressure, difficult parents, role conflict and ambiguity, and isolation. If left unmanaged these factors manifest themselves as higher levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and illness symptoms, as well as a higher likelihood of quitting the teaching profession. In fact, Prilleltensky et al. (2016) implicated the need for programs that include equipping teachers with both motivational and instructional strategies for dealing with stress.

Novice teachers need to learn that they alone harness the tool to help them improve job stressors. While burnout factors mimic risk factors and common stressors, this can cause teachers to perceive the lack of ability to improve these stressful factors

therefore leaving the profession altogether. Our novice teachers, after all, could be leaving the classroom before ever reaching their full potential.

## **Resilience**

Resilience is defined as the ability to adjust to various situations and increase one's competence in the face of adverse conditions. It is often described as the ability to 'bounce back,' to recover in the face of challenges. (Castro et al., 2010; Day & Hong, 2016; Gu & Day, 2007). The idea of resilience originated in the disciplines of psychiatry and developmental psychology in attempt to understand why some at-risk children thrive and others do not (Gu & Day, 2007). Resilience is believed to equip teachers with the capacity to reduce stressors the encounter especially in the beginning of their career (Richards et al., 2016).

Teachers' lives and working conditions can become unbalanced in unforeseeable ways. Resilience is a tool that can be applied to novice teacher lives in every context helping them respond positively to those stressors. By building resilience, novice teachers may reduce the perceptions of role stressors and burnout while raising feelings of personal accomplishment (Richards et al., 2016). If novice teachers feel that they possess the self-efficacy to counter the stressors they experience, they will experience more positive emotions may be more resilient (Jennings & Greenburg, 2009). This study explored the meanings novice teachers made of their yoga practice and its contribution to their development of resilience in stressful situations and their development of key relationships as teachers.

## Summary

Over 30 million people worldwide practice a form of yoga and healthcare professionals are increasingly recommending yoga as an alternative to pharmacological treatments (McCall et al., 2013). Exercise and yogic meditation have been indicated as strategies that resilient teachers use in order to maintain a healthy balance and prevent stress. Resilient teachers are proactive in solving their problems, managing their emotions, prioritizing tasks, and managing time effectively (Howard & Johnson, 2004 p. 415). When teachers are stressed their job performance becomes compromised. While the description of an effective teacher may vary, the ability to monitor conflicts, regulate moods and emotions, calmness and creative are all qualities that any teacher should hope to possess. We need teachers whose brains are operating at optimal levels of performance to command our classrooms.

Resilience for novice teachers proves to be a needed skill to become an effective teacher and universities are not preparing them by providing this type of instruction. Stress management is not something explicitly taught in teacher preparation programs. In fact, in a study conducted by Harris (2011), only five of the 54 programs reviewed offered a course on stress management. Having effective coping strategies at their disposal can empower teachers to resist burnout and work-related stress (Casperson & Raaen, 2014; Dali, 2012; Prilleltensky et al., 2016; Richards et al., 2016). Currently, novice teachers are given professional development that is focused on pedagogy and teaching methods but neglects to offer solutions to handle the emotional strain that accompanies the profession. What more often allows teachers to persist in the profession is the "emotional stuff" (Gu & Day, 2007).

Teacher attrition rates inform us that we can no longer afford to ignore the personal well-being of teachers. Giving teachers yoga as a tool for resilience can make the difference of surviving to thriving. Research indicates that worry and anxiety are often identified as work-related stressors by teachers. Consequently, yoga is often prescribed to reduce anxiety and stress. While novice teachers are typically reticent in openly discussing feelings of burnout, low retention is an indication that work-related stress proves to be overpowering.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand how novice teachers perceive yoga practice as contributing to their development of resilience. This chapter details the design and methods for this research study of novice teachers' perceived resiliency. It encompasses a rationale for the methodology, participant and site selection, as well as descriptions of data collection and analysis. Further included are ethical considerations, delimitations and limitations, issues of trustworthiness, and it closes with a chapter summary.

Developing resilience in novice teachers can help to avoid the pitfalls of stress, burnout, and ultimately premature teacher turnover. Information obtained in this study will inform school district teacher educators as they plan onboarding programs and other novice teacher training. This study adds to the existing body of knowledge on resilience and yoga by providing a different lens on how to use what we know about both of these individually and collectively applying them to the novice teacher experience. This research was guided primarily by examining what characteristics of resiliency novice teachers attribute to their yoga practice. The guiding research question was: How do novice teachers view their yoga practice as contributing to resilience in the face of stressful teaching situations that might lead some to leave the profession?

#### **Rationale for Phenomenology**

Phenomenological research methodology was used to understand how novice teachers perceive resiliency as attributed to their yoga practice. Creswell (2013) asserts that a phenomenological study focuses on the understanding of the lived experiences of individuals around a phenomenon. By gathering data on experiences of novice teachers

who practice yoga, I was able to analyze the essence of their experiences to determine if they thought yogic practices help them to develop characteristics of resiliency. In this study, the phenomenon includes the novice teacher experience and factors that are experienced through yoga that yield perceived personal and professional changes during their novice years. This phenomenon includes how yogic practice changes novice teacher relationships with challenging students, collegial interactions, focus on student learning, and a host of other common challenges.

Moustakas (1994) asserts that phenomena are the building blocks of human science and thus the foundation for knowledge. Perception, he argues, is the primary source of knowledge—a source that cannot be doubted. The entire process of perception creates new moments of consciousness and brings new perspectives. The knowledge of the past, present, and future is then united and increasingly expands and deepens (Moustakas, 1994).

Merleau-Ponty (1962) explains that turning to the lived experience means re-learning to look at the world. When training is developed for novice teachers it often omits instruction on tools to help develop skills that lend itself to characteristics of resiliency. This methodology was selected because we need to investigate the experiences of novice teachers and ‘re-learn’ what it means to properly equip and prepare them to become effective teachers.

Heidegger (as cited in Moustakas) explains that the word phenomenon comes from the Greek word *phaino* and means to bring to light (Moustakas, 1994). It is my hope that this study brings to light how yoga impacts the novice teacher experience.

## **Purposive Sampling of Participants**

The participants that were selected for this study were six full-time, K-12 classroom teachers who practice yoga and have less than four years of teaching experience. Participants were selected from different schools and representative of diverse populations throughout the region. Participants were neither recruited nor excluded based on age, race, ethnicity, or gender. While participants were primarily solicited from Central Texas, others outside of this area were included due to a lack of participants that volunteered in the immediate area. Proximity to the Greater Austin Area was considered in participant selection to allow for easier accessibility for in-person interview scheduling purposes. Teachers from urban schools might offer a distinct perspective considering the unique challenges that resource-poor schools, more often located in urban areas, face and typically experience more teacher turnover. However, the type of school and student population were not criteria for exclusion or inclusion in this study.

In order to compile the needed sample for this research I employed criteria-based and snowball sampling by composing an email sent directly to two K-12 classroom teachers who practice yoga (email included in appendix) along with an invitation to forward to other possible participants. After participants were interviewed they were also asked if they could suggest other possible participants to interview. An email was also sent addressing yoga studio owners across Central Texas and requesting it be forwarded along to their respective membership. A recruitment flyer was also created and distributed at yoga studios and fitness centers in the Greater Austin Area (flyer included in appendix). The recruitment flyer included the verbiage required by the Texas State

Institutional Review Board as well as a weblink to a Google form used as a pre-screening survey for potential participants. The Google form collected email addresses of participants who met the research requirements of: (a) being a full-time K-12 teacher, (b) having less than four years of teaching experience and (c) who practice all components of yoga (poses, breathing, and meditation). Even with this combination of recruitment strategies, volunteers were difficult to locate that fit the study criteria, including that of being a beginning teacher.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Creswell (2013) describes data collection sources that are typically employed in qualitative research. Data collection tools for this study included phenomenological interviews, metaphorical representations, and the researcher’s journal (see Table 1).

<i>TABLE 1. Data Collection Sources</i>				
	<b>Data Type</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>What/When</b>	<b>How</b>
<b>Interviews</b>	Phenomenological Interview	To document participant’s experience.	Two 60-90 minute face-to-face interviews.	Audio-recorded
<b>Metaphorical Representations</b>	Photograph from open-source digital repository of presented yoga pose.	To establish rapport with research participants.	Participant will present a yoga pose that serves as a metaphor of their novice teacher experience. Participants will be asked to come prepared to demonstrate pose during the first interview.	Participant will demonstrate the yoga pose to researcher.
<b>Researcher’s Journal</b>	Handwritten notes of observations and reflections.	To record observations and reflections.	Notes kept during interviews to make note of environmental observations.	Notebook

## **Interviews**

A modified version of the interview series recommended by Seidman (2006) was employed. While the Seidman interview series calls for three interviews for each participant, infringement on busy teachers' time was taken into consideration and interviews one and two were collapsed into one longer interview to help with building context and establishing rapport (Seidman, 2006). Two semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 60-90 minutes in length were conducted with participants in mutually agreed upon places and times that allowed participants to be free from distractions.

Seidman suggests that the first interview establishes the context of the participants' experience by asking them to tell as much about themselves as possible by exploring their past up to the present time. Thus, the first interview conducted called for participants to reflect on their experiences as a novice teacher regarding reality shock, burnout, and daily stress levels. The second part of this initial interview was focused on the concrete details of the participants' present lived experience of being a novice teacher who practices yoga. To put their experience in context novice teachers were asked about their stress level on a typical day as well as what motivated their yoga practice. This semi-structured interview also allowed for the solicitation of stories as a way of eliciting details about their experience in school (see Appendix A). The objectives of both the first and second interviews recommended by Seidman were collapsed into one longer interview lasting approximately 90 minutes at the initial meeting.

The second study interview allowed participants to reflect on the meaning of their experience practicing yoga as a novice teacher. In this interview, the focus was placed on participants' understanding of their experience as it related to their relationships and

resilience (see Appendix B). It encouraged reflection on what meaning their experiences held for them and how those experiences affected their overall quality of life. The last interview was also used for member checking to ensure that transcripts were correct and that preliminary interpretations of the first interviews provided an accurate reflection of what they intended to communicate.

### **Metaphorical Representations**

In order to help to establish rapport, each participant was asked in advance to think of a yoga pose that serves as a metaphor for their novice teacher experience and be prepared to perform this pose upon our meeting. Each participant discussed why they selected their pose which allowed for a better understanding through their explanation. The poses were documented by using images taken of a volunteer that was not involved as a research participant. Furthermore, their chosen asana was used as the pseudonym for each participant ensuring their anonymity remains intact. In the case where a pose was selected by multiple participants Roman numerals followed the name to differentiate (e.g. Child's Pose II).

### **Researcher's Journal**

Throughout the study, a researcher journal was kept to document the process of engaging with participants and reflections on that process. The journal recorded not only notes from the actual interviews but also the impressions and thoughts and feelings about initiating contact, meetings, and location setting, as well as participants' reactions through the entire process of the research. The research journal was intended to provide insight to many specific aspects of the research such as limitations, delimitations and any researcher biases that may have existed.

## **Methods for Data Analysis and Synthesis**

After collecting the data from participants' interviews, I analyzed the data using the series of steps for the phenomenological analysis of interview data as suggested by Moustakas (1994). Prior to data collection I engaged in the epoché process, setting aside past associations, understandings, and biases. Having been a K-12 teacher myself for 15 years I have witnessed several co-workers burnout and leave the profession prematurely, so I tried continuously to remain conscious of my preconceptions to minimize their influence on interpreting data from the participants. The epoché process was the first step in coming to know things and it continued throughout the interviewing process as well.

Data analysis began by studying the transcribed interviews and started with horizontalizing. This happens when all of the data is regarded from every horizon relevant to the topic and research question. I listened to the interviews of each participant extensively and repeatedly throughout the day taking notes. The researcher's journal was used to note the environmental conditions and changes during the interviews as well as the reactions of the participants as certain questions were posed. For example, when asked if certain co-workers required the use of yogic concepts, several participants smiled as if a particular person was called to mind. At times, participants' responses led to other wonderings in which those were documented to revisit later. The researcher's journal was also used to note the physiological benefits said to attach to each of the poses participants selected. These notes also helped me to explore possible reasons why study participants chose their respective metaphorical representation. When we horizontalize, all textual data has equal value as the nature and essence is uncovered. Next, meaning units were taken from those horizontalized statements from participants. Meaning units were then

clustered into common categories or themes, being careful to remove repetitive statements. The researcher’s journal also allowed the space to note possible themes before the conclusion of interviews. Clustered themes were used to develop the textual descriptions of the experience as a whole. The essence of the phenomenon was constructed from the combined textual-structural descriptions from each participant.

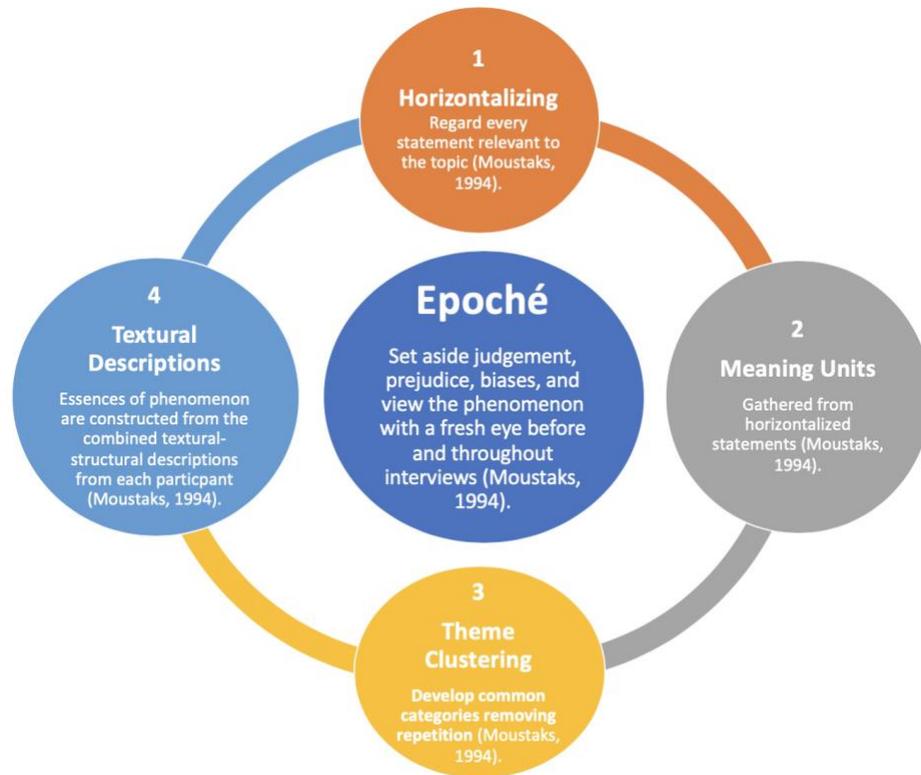


FIGURE 3. *Data Analysis and Synthesis*

### **Ethical Considerations**

As a doctoral student, I applied to Texas State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to secure approval to conduct research with human beings. In order to ensure informed consent I ensured that each participant had enough information to truly give their consent. Before the start of each interview I reviewed the purpose of the

research with each participant and how its potential significance could be used in the field of education. I carefully explained to them how their identities would remain protected through the use of pseudonyms throughout the study to guarantee their confidentiality would be safeguarded. The general details shared in the study about their identity included age, race, sex, teaching assignment, years of teaching experience, and the type of school they are currently assigned (e.g. low SES, public, charter, private, etc.). I also ensured each participant that their campus would in no way be identified to alleviate concerns about their identities being revealed. Before signing consent participants were also informed that the data gathered will be stored on the university's secure server and digitally protected by password.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

Delimitations and limitations identify both boundaries of the scope of the study and potential weaknesses of a study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The focus of this study was to demystify the experiences of K-12 novice teachers who practice yoga. I analyzed the essence of their experiences to determine if yogic practices helped them to develop characteristics of resiliency.

#### **Delimitations**

Creswell (2007) posits that delimitations set the boundaries for a qualitative study and limit the study participants who meet the specific criteria of the study. A delimitation of the study was that these participants could be from different types of campuses, grade levels, and social-economic status, but all needed to be teachers with less than four years of teaching experience.

Another delimitation of the study which could also serve as a limitation was the relatively small amount of time allocated to meet with participants for interviews. While attempting to have in-depth interviews it is also imperative to be respectful of participants' time. Therefore, each interview was limited to a time frame of 60 to 90 minutes for each of the two interviews.

### **Limitations**

A possible limitation beyond my control as a researcher may have been the perceived cost associated with yoga which includes classes and equipment. Novice teachers are typically the lowest paid teachers and may not believe they have the financial resources to afford yoga. This may have influenced the difficulty of finding novice teachers who practice yoga. Available time may have served as another limitation impacting the challenge of locating novice teachers who practice yoga as novice teachers as they are often required to carry extra-curricular activities that extend beyond the school day. This time restriction combined with the individual commitments of personal lives could impact their availability to attend a yoga class as well as to volunteer as a participant.

### **Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research trustworthiness consists of measures by the researcher to address the comparative quantitative measure of validity. Lincoln and Guba (2000) argues that qualitative research be measured under a different scope from quantitative research using terms credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The objective of qualitative researchers remains to control for potential biases throughout the

design, implementation, and analysis of the study, while total objectivity is not assumed as possible.

### **Credibility**

To ensure credibility I began by bracketing my subjectivity with regard to my research topic. Given my experience as a classroom teacher for many years and having experience as a yogi I have extensive knowledge about both experiences. My personal knowledge and previous work with novice teachers provide me with a unique insider perspective to the study. Creswell (2007) declares that researchers must decide how and in what way their experiences are integrated into the study. Throughout this study I bracketed my experiences to ensure the presentation of study findings authentically represented the participants lived experiences and not my own. I attempted to identify personal assumptions and preconceptions pertinent to the research focus and continually monitored these through reflection captured in the researcher's journal throughout the process of the study.

Member checks were also conducted as a way to ensure credibility. I solicited feedback from participants in the form of member checks that took place during the second interview. Prior to the second interview, each participant received an email copy of their individual interview transcriptions along with a summary of my preliminary conclusions for review. During the second interview participants were invited to suggest any edits or corrections that were needed to help ensure accuracy of transcripts or validity of my interpretations of data.

### **Transferability**

Thick and rich descriptions remain a cornerstone of qualitative research. These descriptions allow for transferability because of the detailed information provided about the participants and the setting. I made an effort to present a detailed description of the participants experiences along with each theme and subtheme that emerged.

### **Dependability**

Throughout the process I was thorough in detailing the procedures used to collect and interpret the data. This audit trail allows others to examine the process of inquiry in order to determine its acceptability (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Thick, rich descriptions are provided so that all readers feel interpretations are firmly based in data although it may not be possible to include all data in the findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

### **Confirmability**

Multiple sources of data were used in effort to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied. To help establish confirmability triangulation came from the following: audio-recording interviews, metaphorical representations, and my researcher's journal. These multiple sources of data are the audit trail linkages to validate the findings that emerge from the data (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

### **Summary**

In summary, this research was conducted as a part of a qualitative study utilizing the methodology of phenomenology. A sample of six novice teachers who practice yoga was selected for participation and their profiles described. This chapter also discussed how the Seidman (2006) interview structure of phenomenological interview approach was modified as a guide to collect data. Additionally I discussed how I asked participants

to create metaphorical representations with yoga poses to learn more about them and build rapport as well as using a researcher journal to document non-verbal and para-linguistic communication. I discussed the methods for data analysis and synthesis used in the study, which come from a series of procedures suggested by Moustakas (1994). The chapter concluded with ethical considerations, study limitations and delimitations, and a discussion of issues of trustworthiness.

#### IV. FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings that emerged from the analysis of the experiences shared by six participants. It presents the findings from metaphorical representations, interviews, and the researcher’s journal to answer the research question: How do novice teachers view their yoga practice as contributing to resilience in the face of stressful teaching situations that might lead some to leave the profession? The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand how yoga practice contributes to the development of resilience in novice teachers.

The chapter begins with an introduction of the participants through a demographic table (Table 2) and continues with more in-depth participant profiles in order to understand the context of their novice teaching experience as well as their experience with yoga. Findings are presented as emergent themes that were surmised from the data collected from participants. There were three major themes that emerged from the participant data: (a) Reset, (b) Reflection, and (c) Non-Attachment.

Participant	Gender	Race	Age	Years Teaching	Pseudonym
1	Female	Black	31-35	3	Tree
2	Female	Afro-Latina	26-30	3	Downward Facing Dog
3	Male	White	36-40	2	Child’s Pose I
4	Female	Black	31-35	2	Child’s Pose II
5	Female	White	26-30	3	Eagle
6	Male	Black	36-40	3	Headstand

## Participant Profiles

### Participant #1- Tree

Participant #1 is a seventh grade English Language Arts teacher who teaches at a Title I middle school that serves grades six through eight. Her campus is comprised of a large Hispanic population followed by a smaller number of African Americans and a handful of White and Asian students. Participant #1 chose the Tree pose when asked to identify a yoga pose that serves as a metaphorical representation of her novice teacher experience. She chose this pose because it requires balance and can only be mastered when there is an understanding of the body and breathing.

I really have to go inward to make sure what I'm doing on the outside is matching the pose. In this journey as an educator I've learned that it's really about how I function on the inside. How I understand myself as a human, as a woman, as a mom, and as a daughter. All of these different variables that make me who I am really make me an educator. So when I understand who I am in the inside, then everything else reflects in the pose.

From this point on, Participant #1 will be referred to as Tree.



FIGURE 4. *Photograph of Tree Pose.*

Currently in her third year of teaching she explains that she decided to become a teacher because she desired to have an impact on students' lives in order to make a difference and have a connection with students. She was inspired to become a teacher by one of her high school teachers who was unconventional in his methods but connected with his students and treated them much like a parent would a child. He motivated her to attend college through his willingness to help students to navigate the college application process and celebrating student successes. Due to her witnessing the relationships he had with students, her reality shock came when she thought this would automatically happen with her students when she started teaching. "Honestly, I thought I was going to just come in and just be Mr. \_\_\_\_\_!" After trying to recreate those things her model teacher did and having them fail, Tree realized that none of those things mattered.

I tried to get the outward pose without first doing the work on the inside to really build relationship and just really get to know them. I think I was just trying to have the appearance first without really doing the actual work.

Although she admits it is challenging work, she is very optimistic about her novice teaching experience. When asked to rate her daily stress level on a scale from one to five, she rates it very low at a two. She attributes this low stress to being prepared and having good relationships with students. The stress that she feels is self-imposed as feeling the need to rise to the expectations placed on her by administration and colleagues. This participant equates burnout to a lack of drive and passion and insists that could not happen with her because she refuses to quit or give up because of her passion for her profession. However, when it comes to having a work-life balance she admits to

being overwhelmed and lacking coping mechanisms or strategies to overcome those feelings.

Tree practiced yoga before she began her teaching career. Her practice was motivated by her attempt to deal with anxiety. She learned yoga at home by practicing alongside video cassette tapes. She lacks an in-depth understanding of yoga in regards to the different types of yoga but appreciates a slow flow that allows for reflection. Tree defines resilience as being unstoppable.

It's kind of like you're rolling a stone up a hill and it's trying to press you back down. You find a different way and you maneuver to keep it from pushing you down. You just don't give up. You keep pressing.

#### **Participant #2- Downward Facing Dog**

Participant #2 is currently a high school Spanish teacher at what she considers to be an urban/rural school. She has taught at multiple schools but her experience mostly consists of working in a Title I school where her students are predominantly Latinx and Black. Participant #2 chose Downward Facing Dog when asked to provide a yoga pose that serves as a metaphorical representation of her novice teacher experience. She chose this pose because even as she described struggling in the very beginning, she still felt as if she had some measure of control.

I was trying to think of ways to build up my pedagogy, not just to survive to the next day. So even though with Downward Facing Dog I'm in a vulnerable position, I still have strength in my legs. I can still stand up at a certain point. From this point on, Participant #2 will be referred to as Downward Facing Dog (DFD).



FIGURE 5. *Photograph of Downward Facing Dog Pose.*

DFD is in her third year of her teaching career and she has known she wanted to be a teacher since she was a really young girl. “I was that one kid who was playing school all the time with my teddy bears.” That passion followed DFD into high school where she noticed that she was really good at explaining things and helping other students in class. Teaching for her gives her life a meaning and purpose. “I see this profession as life or death; its way more important than a brain surgeon. One bad surgeon harms one person at a time. One bad teacher harms 150 at a time.” Having attended primarily Title I schools her entire life, her reality shock came when she had an opportunity to teach on a military base. DFD was accustomed to students having a connection with their teachers that went beyond a traditional student-teacher relationship. She noticed that her students on the military base seemed largely disconnected. She reflected on their detached behavior and concluded that this is something that has developed as a result of having to move a lot.

When asked to rate her stress level, DFD responded that she is “constantly working at a four.” She explains that the expectation of always having to meet the needs

and requests of students, especially when these requests seem to come consistently all day, is a constant source of stress. Constantly making decisions all day long as a basic part of your job is demanding and can be wearing. Understanding that meeting the needs of the students is a stress that sort of comes with the job, she mentioned that the most stressful part of her job comes from the other adults in the building. Last minute expectations from campus administration in addition to teaching six to seven classes a day adds additional stress. Since her subject is not required as part of a state exam, she is often asked to cover other teacher's classes while they complete reports that require extensive data mining on student assessment results. DFD also mentioned that she is also asked to cover other teachers classrooms during her planning period if teachers are absent and the building lacks substitute coverage. During these times that means that she goes the entire day without having a break. This can be particularly stressful when she has planned to complete certain things during her planned breaks, but then she doesn't get that break. There are times where DFD feels that she is experiencing teacher burnout. During those time she wonders if this amount of stress is normal, and if this is really what it's supposed to be like. She also wonders if this is what she feels like at year three, how much worse will it get as time goes on. DFD has an aunt who is a Superintendent of Schools and commented on how work-related stress caused her aunt to have a stroke before the age of forty. To counter these feelings of burnout, a few of DFD's coping mechanisms include making time for friends, taking walks in nature, mindfulness, quiet time alone, journaling and reading books. She mentioned that sometimes just sleeping in from time to time provides her with the self-care that she needs as well.

Downward Facing Dog has been practicing yoga since she was diagnosed with clinical depression in college. Refusing to take medication, she went through cognitive behavior therapy and researched other alternatives to medication like relaxation and finding a community to be a part of. She started with yoga as it was offered for free in a neighborhood park where she lived. Although she does not practice as often as she would like “because life gets in the way” she is aware that yoga is a tool for her that is always within her reach. DFD defines resilience as the ability to “get stronger after stumbling over some blocks on the road. Not just the fact that it didn’t bring you down, but it made you even better after getting through it.”

### **Participant #3- Child’s Pose I**

Participant #3 is a special education teacher who mostly serves students with autism. Currently he teaches primary grades at an urban school that is classified as Title I. While he notes that his school sits across the street from \$2 million homes, about 60% of the school population is categorized economically disadvantaged because many children come from neighboring section eight housing developments. The student population on his campus consists of approximately 60% Hispanic, 30% White, and 4% African American with a large immigrant refugee population. Participant #3 chose Child’s Pose when asked to provide a yoga pose that serves as a metaphorical representation of his novice teacher experience. He chose this pose because not being a product of a traditional educational system required him to develop another lens.

I grew up outside the educational system and Child’s Pose is a very receptive pose and I’ve had to do a lot of learning. I had to learn to be a person inside the educational system. I didn’t learn the way public school is taught and its really

tough for me to teach in lesson plans or figure out all the behavior rules that go along with being in the classroom, because I didn't have to learn any of that, you know?

From this point on, Participant #3 will be referred to as Child's Pose I (CP I).



FIGURE 6. *Photograph of Child's Pose.*

Now in his second year of teaching, CP I mentions that in his pursuit to find a “grown-up job” it was important for him to have a career that he enjoys doing and one that also aligns with his personal values. CP I notes that he was shocked about the amount of time it takes to properly prepare for the job, adding how most weekends he spends an additional ten hours in his classroom preparing lessons for the upcoming week. Growing up adjacent to the educational system, he was also shocked by the reality of the vast amount of structural deficiencies of the system. “We have an educational system that has existed for 70 to 80 years in its current form, and its structure is not designed to promote learning but designed to promote compliance.” CP I finds it difficult to navigate this system because as a homeschooled student, he was taught how to learn and not simply how to “follow rules.” While he recognizes the importance these rules can play in

society, he also expressed the difficulty in expressing love for his students within those rules. He remarked that sometimes he has to move on to lessons or activities that he knows his students may not be developmentally ready for in order to be compliant to the district and campus rules and expectations.

CP I notes that his daily stress level is about a four on a scale of five and is largely due to being pulled off schedule multiple times to respond to student escalations. These interruptions often throw the day's schedule off, which interferes in fulfilling required service minutes. CP I also notes that there is not a Teaching Assistant available to him which places additional strain on his time due to not having help in the classroom. Another stress factor is the long hours that he works, which are typically from 6:00 a.m. to about 6:00 p.m. during the week. Managing the emotions of the other adults he encounters is also challenging. "The exchange of emotions in a high stress, high pressure filled environment like a school and having to process all the exchanged emotional information for the adults that aren't processing for themselves makes for an emotionally intense job."

When asked if he ever experiences teacher burnout, CP I replied "yes—everyday." He knows when he is at the point of burnout because in those times he finds that he lacks the mental capacity to work through the things he needs to. His coping mechanism to deal with the feeling of burnout is spending money, mostly on food, and yoga. He finds that his regular yoga practice helps him to maintain equilibrium.

CP I has been practicing yoga off and on for 20 years. He became more dedicated to his yoga practice when he was seeking some sort of physical activity and meditative practice that would help him maintain sobriety. While he has had no formal yoga

training, he practices two to five times per week at a yoga studio. CP I defines resilience as the ability to maintain functioning in general. “Whether that’s trauma or difficult relationships, you know somebody who’s resilient is able to bounce back from difficult situations and get back to their normal level of functioning.”

#### **Participant #4- Child’s Pose II**

Participant #4 is a fourth grade English Language Arts teacher at a charter school at which the focus is on authentic learning experiences more so than traditional public schools. She estimates the school demographic as being 50% White, 10-15% African American, 5-10% Asian, and the remaining population is Latino or mixed race. Participant #4 chose Child’s Pose when asked to provide a yoga pose that serves as a metaphorical representation of her novice teacher experience. She chose this pose because she says that child’s pose helps her to calm down. Many times when she is stressed and feeling exhausted through the day she finds herself wishing she could stop and do the pose at school. From this point on, Participant #4 will be referred to as Child’s Pose II (CP II). See Figure 6.

A major influence on CP II’s choice of teaching as a career was her grandmother, who she spent a lot of time with as a child and who was her teacher in second grade. Later, she started teaching English overseas and enjoyed it so much that upon her arrival back in the States she pursued her teaching credentials. CP II is currently in her second year of teaching and works at the elementary school that she attended as a child.

When she began teaching CP II was shocked by the amount of time spent completing paperwork and attending meetings. Much of her paperwork is required to make sure that individual student needs are being addressed and interventions are being

properly adhered to and documented. On a scale from one to five, CP II noted that her stress level is dependent on her class schedule. She teaches three block classes per day, and for two of those classes, she remarked that her stress level ranges between a one to two. However, for the other class, she told me that her stress level is about a four to five. The largest source of this stress comes from extreme behavior of students, most of whom have a lot of academic needs. She explains that the school's response to student behavior needs improvement as well. "Finding the balance between being nurturing and caring but also making sure that there are consequences when students are constantly acting out. I don't think our school has quite found that balance yet." Other than this, CP II is happy with her school overall. She feels good about the curriculum, enjoys the freedom and support from the academic coach, and appreciates the constructive feedback she receives regularly from her Director.

She admits to having felt burnout before, when she had a particularly challenging class, and although there were five other adults in the classroom at the time, she felt completely helpless. At this particular time there were a large number of students enrolled in that class that exhibited extremely challenging behavior that served as triggers for others. Those behaviors included instigating verbal altercations with other students, emotional meltdowns, and starting physical fights. She remembers one day when things were really bad and she thought "I don't want to do this right now. Like why am I doing this?" She continued by saying, "you start feeling like if I can't help this group, then maybe I need to stop. Maybe I need to do something else." She mentioned that in moments of feeling burnout she uses the school initiative called Core Practice. This quiet meditative breathing involves asking students with closed eyes to breathe deeply for one

to two minutes. She mentioned listening to music and practicing yoga as strategies she uses at home.

CP II has practiced yoga on and off for about 15 years. She started practicing yoga as a way to live a healthier lifestyle when she went to college. When she went overseas, she used yoga to de-stress from the culture shock. When she lived in China, she had the convenience of having a studio that she liked right down the street; now she mostly practices at home. CP II defines resilience as not giving up.

Just don't give up, you know. The things that you need to do, you have goals that you have to reach, and you just keep trying until you achieve them. There's no time to fail. If something doesn't work out, you try another way. But you have to keep going. You have to keep working.

#### **Participant #5- Eagle**

Participant #5 teaches Science at an urban high school that serves approximately 4000 students. She estimates the demographics of her school to be about 30% African American, 25% Asian, 20% Latino, and the rest Caucasian. Participant #5 chose Eagle when asked to provide a yoga pose that serves as a metaphorical representation of her novice teacher experience. She chose this pose due to the tension and release motion this pose provides. She explained "I feel like so much of the time I'm stuck, like in a bind, and then when I leave school I can open the eagle up again once I'm done for the day." From this point on, Participant #5 will be referred to as Eagle.



FIGURE 7. *Photograph of Eagle Pose.*

Eagle came into the profession by the way of an alternative teaching certification program that offered subsidized tuition to get a master's degree in teaching. Eagle worked in an afterschool program that provided informal learning experiences for students which she enjoyed. So when she saw advertisements on her daily commute to work that offered a fast track to a teaching career while making a full time salary, she applied to the program on a whim. Her reality shock moment came when she found herself teaching a summer school classroom in 99-degree heat with no air conditioning and no books, where half the students were asleep. She admitted thinking that this is not what she thought teaching would be at all.

Eagle said that her daily stress level is a five out of five. One of the primary reasons that her stress level is constantly elevated is in part due to her school building being overcrowded. Eagle also shared that she sees a therapist for general anxiety and that she does not like crowds. This anxiety is exacerbated by navigating crowded

hallways every class period. “Have you ever been to Times Square in New York City? The hallways of my school are like that during passing periods.” Eagle also mentions that she is not assigned a classroom of her own. Instead she travels with her supplies on a cart to the three or four classrooms she teaches in throughout the day. “We have four floors and two buildings. I have to push myself through the halls to get to class and then I arrive in class, and I’m sweaty and anxious and then I have to teach for 40 minutes.” When asked about other stresses, she mentions planning, paperwork, parent communication, and administrative demands all make for “a recipe for endless stress.”

Eagle is in her second year of teaching and she is currently experiencing burnout. She is questioning how much longer she can continue in the profession and has discussed with her principal possibly leaving her teaching post mid-year because of how unhappy she has become. “I find it hard to get out of bed because I don’t really want to go to work.” Eagle acknowledged that outside of work she does not have a vibrant social life like many of her coworkers. Her coping methods consist of practicing yoga, quiet time, and listening to music.

Eagle was led to yoga in college when she shared with a friend about the academic stress she was experiencing. Her friend suggested yoga as a way to combat the stress she was under and invited her to attend a class. Eagle has been practicing yoga in various studios for the last ten years and recently participated in a yoga training workshop designed for classroom teachers. Eagle defines resilience as the ability to overcome obstacles and the ability to struggle without giving up.

## **Participant #6- Headstand**

Participant #6 teaches Social Studies at an urban/suburban middle school. He mentioned that the school is Title I and estimates the demographics to be about 65% Hispanic, 30% African American, and 5% other races. Participant #6 chose Headstand when asked to provide a yoga pose that serves as a metaphorical representation of his novice teacher experience. He chose this pose because it requires a strong foundation in order to be successful at it. Even though the name of this position is Headstand, you are not balancing on your head. In fact, you are using the strength of your arms.

So for me with teaching, its more about having a good strong base. Having a little bit of faith to just kind of leap up and to stay in balance. It gets tough when hanging upside down because you have to stay up and stay in control.

From this point on, Participant #6 will be referred to as Headstand.



*FIGURE 8. Photograph of Headstand Pose.*

Although Headstand is the product of parents who were both teachers he assured me this was not the reason that he chose the profession for himself. Friends often complimented him on his ability to clearly explain things to others and often suggested that he consider teaching. Once he figured that he could use the degree and experience he already had and simply take a test, he realized that this was an attainable route for him that would not be too laborious. "I kinda wound up teaching as a fluke, but after my first year I really fell in love with it and the positive impact I can have on students." When Headstand was asked about experiencing reality shock he reflected on how no book can truly prepare you for the realities of the classroom.

Nothing can prepare you for the first day of teaching and those kids come in the room, and they're looking at you and you're like, okay! Nothing prepares you for the kid that cusses you out or the kids who are having sex in the building. Stuff like that. You just have to develop good judgement, know and understand the law, and figure out proper boundaries.

Headstand reported that his daily stress level varies from a two to three on a scale of five and typically is caused by a lack of respect demonstrated by students. He mentioned that one of the things that really bothers him is when students talk while he is talking. He also mentioned that the lack of availability of administrators when issues arise can also cause situations to become stressful as well.

In his third year of teaching, Headstand mentioned experiencing feelings of burnout since the middle of last school year. He noted that the source of his burnout is larger than any one issue but is definitely not the kids. Headstand has issues with the

current school model and paradigm of education as a whole. So in fact, he feels that the education system as a whole is flawed.

We're basically teaching kids as if it's the 1950s but we are approaching 2020, and it's not taking into account all the big things that change. They expect for kids to just sit down, take focused notes, and just learn.

He also mentioned how stressful testing is and how he feels that it does not do anything for knowledge. "I can teach you how to pass the test, but what does that do?" Seeing the old model used to teach today's kids, Headstand feels that our kids are losing because of this. Headstand uses yoga as a coping mechanism along with music therapy. He also mentioned that at times, he also does mindfulness meditations and yoga with his students as well.

Headstand began practicing yoga long before he started his teaching career. His yoga practice was motivated by a spiritual journey in Hinduism and the ancient practice of Bhakti yoga. Headstand defined resilience as:

Bounce back. Like you might get a knock, but you don't just stay on the ground like 'I'm done'. You figure out a way to come back stronger. You're still in the fight, you're still in the game. It's not a total loss, and it's not a defeat. You figure out a way to keep it moving and keep it going because you realize what's really at stake.

### **Emergent Themes**

Analysis of the experiences of these novice K-12 teachers gleaned from their interviews resulted in the emergence of three themes. The first theme focused on how practicing yoga gives them the ability to reset from challenging experiences and overall

job-related stress. The second theme addressed the participants ability to reflect on situations and to view them with a different lens. The third theme addressed how yoga helps them to develop non-attachment to situations they experience. These themes and subthemes are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3. <i>Emergent Themes</i>		
Reset	Reflection	Non-Attachment

**Reset**

Participants in this study emphasized the role that yoga plays in the contribution of their resilience. Many of them emphasized the need to empty out all the teacher stressors they are surrounded with on a daily basis. Teachers are tasked with making hundreds of decisions along with diffusing situations and problems on a regular basis. Participants mentioned the role that yoga plays in their ability to be able to take a break from making decisions and not having to think.

Downward Facing Dog recalled a time she attended a free class at a neighborhood community center and the instructor asked participants to freestyle movement. “I was like, no, tell me what to do! That’s why I’m here. I need structure and specific steps.” The thought of having to make any decisions during the yoga class causes her to not enjoy the class as much. It also does not allow her to reap the full benefits that she looks for when attending.

Eagle recalled from her experiences practicing yoga by admitting “I honestly don’t even think during class and that’s so nice as a teacher just to not be using my brain for a second and just do something that’s different.” She continues with “I can clear my

head. I don't really have to think about what I'm doing. They are guiding me so I can just put my body in their hands."

Participants spoke about the brain drain that all the decision-making causes and spoke of how yoga allows them the opportunity to temporarily empty the brain. This emptying allows for participants to be able to "clear up space," allowing them to take on more without burning out.

Downward Facing Dog told about how when she allows herself to take a break, it helps her to build resilience. Downward Facing Dog recounted:

It's a good space to sort of just let go of everything that comes at you throughout the day. Thinking back on the days where I've done it during the week that I've had work, it's just nice to just release all that stress. The next day I feel refreshed, re-energized, like go ahead, fill me back up with all these demands. I got this!

Child's Pose I acknowledged:

Definitely allows whatever I've absorbed during the day to come out. Emotional energy, sadness, anger, frustration with kids and adults and parents. It's probably the main thing that allows me to keep my mental health and my coming to work every day.

Child's Pose I continued:

Two weeks ago I was sick so I only practiced once that week and I just barely made it through that week. When I don't practice I don't feel like I have the mental capacity to really work through the things I need to.

Child's Pose I pointed out that yoga plays an important part of his mental health. While he recognizes it may not put him in the most optimal mental state, yoga helps him keep from going down too far. "It's enough to maintain equilibrium."

Child's Pose II explained:

As a parent and as a teacher and having all kinds of other things that I'm trying to take care of I feel like it can be a nice way to reset whether its at the end of the day or if I go to bed early enough to get up to do it before work. So just kind of helps to keep me mentally calm so that when I have kids coming at me with all their issues, all of their energy and I'm able to deal with it without freaking out.

Tree pointed out that "yoga gets you to breathe and with that breathing you're pushing out all the weight and the stress from the day."

Learning to use controlled breath in yoga has also helped participants in dealing with teacher stress. For instance, Tree professed:

One of the things is just honestly the breathing and it sounds so simple, but I think it helps to just be in the moment. So like when I'm in my class and I feel like throwing something at somebody I just take a minute to breathe and just be. It just helps me to be more present.

Tree noted that "yoga gets you to breathe and with that breathing you're pushing out all the weight and the stress from the day."

Eagle admitted that she doubts that she would have lasted in teaching this long if not for yoga. She continued by explaining, "It helps me to take deep breaths when times are getting hard and I'm feeling stressed. When I find myself panicking at work yoga has taught me to find my breath."

Headstand took a similar approach and added, “Sometimes you have to breathe and do a [mental] countdown.” He continued by explaining the space in which taking those breaths helps him to understand situations better. “You have to take some time to remember your purpose and assess situations, and be like, what’s going on here? Is this a temporary problem or is this going to be a long-term thing?” Breathing allows participants the space they need to assess situations properly.

Downward Facing Dog affirmed:

In the process of breathing, you are also trying to empty out the brain—and that’s really hard to do. Constantly thinking all the time to try to get into that practice of noticing things that happen and yet still being able to let them go. I feel like breathing is what I’ve taken out of yoga and I’ve tried to use in everyday situations.

Yoga practice gives teachers a break from decision making and provides space to not think and empty out stress. Findings from participants agree with the research that teachers need a way to empty out all the stress that teachers build up from their teacher responsibilities. The cognitive load these stressors place on teachers makes it difficult to function. Stern (2019) suggests breathing practices as a useful tool whenever you need to calm yourself down or increase your energy for focus. Learning to use controlled breath in yoga has also helped participants in this study in dealing with teacher stress.

### **Reflection**

Participants recounted how during yoga practice they often reflect on their teaching decisions and interactions with colleagues. Sometimes this reflection comes from intentional time spent in meditation to position exchanges with a positive lens.

Other times this reflection comes during the actual practice of yoga where they relate their experience with asanas as parallel to the challenges they attempt to navigate in a professional context.

With teachers having so many demands placed on their time, participants reported they sometimes found it hard keeping up with day to day tasks demanded of them. While reflection can be critical in developing pedagogical skills, often times teachers do not have time to properly process their experiences. Tree mentioned that she enjoys that yoga gives her time to reflect. In her thinking about moments that get particularly challenging and chaotic, Tree recalls how she takes a few moments at the end of a challenging day after dismissal,

I will usually close my door, turn the lights out. And I'll take a minute to reflect on the positives of the day. Things that have gone well. Sometimes I think as educators we get stuck on everything that didn't go the way we planned it. So I take the time to think about all the kids that did do well and when you really start to go back you realize that it's not that bad and we can try again tomorrow.

Tree says that having that time during yoga allows her to process through her thoughts, providing room for her to move from guilt and blame and move to a place of gratitude for what did work. She also acknowledged that it provides space to remember who she is as a person which allows her not "to get caught up in the rat race."

Downward Facing Dog shared similar sentiments about what this time during yoga practice allows in regards to reflection. She recalled a moment during yoga practice where the instructor asked them to stay in a yoga pose a little longer. DFD admits that Yogi Squat is a very difficult pose for her, and it is quite uncomfortable, so she was

bothered that she was being asked to stay in this particular pose longer. It was in this moment that DFD realized the parallel to challenging daily life situations. “Nothing lasts forever. You just need to hold on a little bit longer and it will pass. So in real life when things get hard, give it a minute, it’ll pass.”

Students rely on teachers to teach many skills that extend beyond the academic curriculum. Social emotional skills are taught often informally as students interact with teachers. Time spent in yoga practice also allows teachers the ability to reflect on the impact of social emotional skills. This reflection allows them opportunities to develop a different lens which helps them improve their development of those skills. It is important that teachers are able to demonstrate a level of emotional savvy that enables them not to react emotionally to situations. Teachers should understand that they will encounter many different situations and should be prepared to deal with them accordingly.

Child’s Pose II explained “so I have to kind of mentally prepare myself. Like, I know this parent is going to say something that will annoy me but you just need to stay calm and composed and you will get through it.” Headstand echoed this sentiment by adding “It sometimes helps me to evaluate and take steps back to realize that what’s happening isn’t really about me.”

Downward Facing Dog elaborated on this by recounting the steps she goes through when she experiences difficult colleagues.

I guess in a sense I pause and take a moment to assess where I am. Like in yoga, lots of time in the poses that you are doing you know you’re feeling certain parts of your body that you weren’t feeling before in certain stretches and positions, movements. So when I’m interacting with staff, sometimes I have to stop myself

and think what am I feeling right now? Depending on what they are telling me or what actions they have. I also try to put myself in their shoes of what they are feeling at that moment as well.

Similarly, Headstand stressed the importance of not reacting in the moment based on emotions. He professed “you have to assess and figure out what’s really important. Sometimes you have to remind yourself that problems that come up are only temporary and this is going to pass. In fact, once they leave it has already passed.”

Many times teachers feel as if they are working in isolation and feel they are facing the stressors alone. This tension with colleagues can make developing healthy social emotional connections challenging, and as a result, could cause misunderstandings to be escalated. Child’s Pose I explained,

We exist in an emotional economy, right? And the exchange of emotions in a high-stress pressure-filled environment like a school, like having to processing and exchanging all the emotional information for the adults that aren’t processing it for themselves, you know, or are getting escalated by students. It’s a very emotionally intense job.

Child’s Pose I noted how this is an important skill to have with students as well.

It’s a big thing to not let the frustrations of the job affect how they [students] experience you. They need to experience you as safe and as a model to grow. And they can’t do that if they’re stressed or if their cortisol levels are going up, they just, they can’t learn that stress brain doesn’t learn.

He continued by adding,

Maintaining your own, non-emotional reactivity, and being able to maintain the tone of voice and the facial expression and all of that to allow kids to feel safe.

This influences my way of being. My big thing is like moving and thinking slower and just waiting to experience things rather than rushing through them.

Similarly, Downward Facing Dog shared her ability to exercise more patience with colleagues.

I would say that when I'm dealing with other colleagues I tend to listen and ask questions more than anything. I think of that process more psychologically now, almost like we are having a therapy session with understanding communication skills.

Headstand also reflected on his need to demonstrate more patience with colleagues.

Some people have personalities where they want to tell you how to do everything even though it's things you already know how to do. And sometimes they'll overstep professional boundaries to prove to you that they know more than you or they know what's best. And you really have to call on yoga to help you in such situations because they don't realize they're being degrading, hurtful, and condescending. So you have to use yoga on those situations or else you'll be in the office with a reprimand form.

Eagle added, "I try to take a step back and think about where they are coming from. Or why might they be using this particular tone? Maybe something happened earlier today. So maybe this isn't a personal thing."

Child's Pose II notes that emotional reactivity is easier to maintain simply by keeping things in perspective. "With yoga, it helps you to think about things that are important or not so important. So I feel like that carries over into my life as well."

Headstand says that yoga allows him to demonstrate more compassion with his colleagues by recognizing that "the body may just be reacting to physical stimuli like stress, stress as a physical stimuli." He continues by emphasizing,

It helps me focus on compassion more and being able to see a person for more than just what's physically present to me, you know? So I'm looking more internal and just reminding myself that I'm dealing with a person.

We say 'Namaste' which is basically saying that the soul in me is balanced with the soul in you. Or the energy in me is recognizing your energy. So what you are really telling a person is that I see you for you. And so I have to realize that what I'm dealing with might be physical manifestation. So whatever problem that I'm dealing with, that's a physical thing.

Yoga practice allows teachers the opportunity to actively engage in noticing the changing feelings and sensations of their body as they move through different postures. This conscious observation leads teachers to become overall more reflective practitioners. Participants discussed how during yoga practice they also reflect on their practice as an educator including how they interact with colleagues as well. Yoga practice has taught them to slow down enough as to properly assess situations so they will not over react to them. Extending what they have learned in yoga practice, participants discussed how they pause to take a moment to understand where they are at in a situation and to seek out the best response in that situation. This is an important skill as students need to experience

teachers as safe and a model for proper behavior. Participants also explained how this reflection also plays a key role in interactions they have with colleagues as well.

### **Non-Attachment**

Non-attachment is an intentional practice of letting go and moving on (Hepburn & McMahon, 2017; Simpkins & Simpkins, 2014). It is the ability to move through life without letting things, people, or situations have such a hold that it causes you to make poor choices. Participants discussed this skill learned in yoga practice and how this helps them to learn to be in the moment and be true to themselves even in uncomfortable situations. Participants reflected on how those situations affect their ability to be resilient as novice teachers.

Being a novice teacher you experience many moments where you may not know exactly the right response. Tree noted,

Just leaning back and allowing ourselves to be vulnerable to that moment.

Allowing whatever happens just to take it at face value and then you can kind of sift through it later. So I really feel like yoga just helps you to process where you are in that moment.

Child's Pose I affirmed those sentiments,

With the development of consciousness you are less involved in your own plans and designs. You become more effective in the world and the world responds to you better. This in turn makes you more effective and you're able to be more influential and help people in a sort of virtuous cycle sort of thing.

He also cautioned against wasting energy by trying to force things into something they aren't.

We're not burning up energy foolishly. You can burn up energy going out, making the world the way you want to, and then all of that energy use either gets absorbed and your body or your brain, or you just lose it all and you kind of collapse into a puddle. But if you're not trying to force things to happen and trying to help them happen, or allow them to happen, and then you're not using up your energy, and you can use that elsewhere.

Being in the moment also helps you to be able to fully engage in the experience of teaching and developing professionally. Tree explained that,

It helps to be a risktaker because you tried something and it didn't work, So it still has to be in that category. Like I'm going to try something that nobody else is willing to try or I'm going to do something that nobody else was doing, And that concept of being willing to try something and continue to keep trying until it works.

Participants were aware of their yoga practice helping them to develop a clear lens on developing their professional identity. Teachers are routinely rated and compared to other colleagues and measured against a professional standard. Yoga practice allows time for introspection and helps to release the stress comparison causes. Tree acknowledged,

In really recognizing who I am and being centered in who I am. There's a lot of competition and comparing and just hustle and bustle. It allows me to be sure of who I am, remembering just to breathe and just recognize who I am as a person.

Headstand tells about how knowing your worth helps to put things into proper perspective. He recounted, "somedays you look around and you notice a lot of

diminishing returns when you are putting in so much and not getting a lot back. It makes you feel like, ‘what am I doing?’ He continued, “knowing your value and what you offer can sometimes help with that feeling.”

Child’s Pose II also noted about the lessons she has learned from her yoga practice. She mentioned:

I guess it helps me to stay drama free in a way that I know if something is not important I just kind of let it roll off my back. Keeping composure and not letting others upset me or stress me out is a big one. I have to stay focused on whatever goal that I have. I know with the yoga meditation aspect, I try to do that.

She continued by pointing out that she makes sure not to take things too seriously.

Child’s Pose II explained, “I’m not letting myself get angry and that when students are not following expectations, or parents are sending rude emails, you know, I just try to take a breath and walk away for a moment.”

Downward Facing Dog explained how she understood that her colleagues could be in a very different emotional state when conflicts arise.

You’ve got to come meet them where they’re at in order to [help them] move them to a different emotional place. Sometimes you’ve got to feel out where you are in order to get to where you need to be.

Eagle acknowledged, “It’s really helped in teaching me to let things go. Like when you have those toxic relationships and to help you realize that the person is not worth your energy. Especially if they are depleting me.” She continued by adding,

It helps me to be more comfortable with myself. It helps me to have a more open feeling towards life. Like some things aren’t going to work out and it’s going to

be okay. It just a comfort to know that no matter what happens that yoga is there. Like when you are having the worst day I can go to my mat and for five to ten minutes everything's going be okay.

Non-attachment helped study participants learn to be fully present in the moment. They described how being in the moment also helped them to fully engage in the experience of teaching and developing professionally. Non-attachment also helped novice teachers interviewed understand conflicts with colleagues differently. Drawing on the principle of non-attachment learned as part of their yoga practice, participants noted that they were able to understand that colleagues could be in varying emotional states when conflicts arise. Using this understanding helped them to put things into proper perspective.

### **Summary**

This chapter chronicled the experiences of six full-time, K-12 classroom teachers who practice yoga and have less than four years of teaching experience. The chapter began with an introduction of the participants through a demographic table (Table 2) and continues with more in-depth participant profiles in order to understand the context of their novice teaching experience as well as their experience with yoga. Three themes that emerged from the analysis of the participants' experiences as shared in interviews were presented. The themes presented were: (a) Reset, (b) Reflection, and (c) Non-Attachment.

The first theme addressed the participants ability to experience a reset through their yoga practice. Practicing yoga allowed teachers to have the cognitive break needed due to all of the decisions teachers are required to make on a daily basis. The time they spend practicing yoga allows them to "cut their brains off" allowing it to rest. The

practice of yoga also allowed participants the ability to release all the stress that builds due to teaching. Learning pranayama breathing techniques also proved to help teachers properly process stressful situations and challenges they experience. The second theme presented was reflection. Participants shared their experiences with mentally processing difficult situations with colleagues and parents. Yoga practice encourages participants to be intentional and thoughtful in their actions. Participants spoke of reflecting on their interactions as well as their instructional practices. Yoga has taught participants how to withhold emotional reactivity and to assess situations through a lens of compassion and patience.

The third theme discussed was non-attachment. Participants shared experiences of how yoga has taught them to be present in the moment and how to let things go. These encounters reinforced their lens as they develop their professional identities.

## **V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The problem of attrition has come to a point where it can no longer be ignored. Teachers are entering the profession and leaving often before realizing their professional potential. Their leaving cannot generally be attributed to a lack of pedagogical knowledge, raising questions about the lack of effective tools to deal with the negative stress they encounter as a teacher. Although teaching is the only profession into which one has been indoctrinated since childhood, novice teachers experience reality shock once immersed themselves.

This study centered on the lived experiences of full-time K12 teachers with less than four years teaching experience. The study explored what the sources of their most significant stressors were. In addition, it examined how participants felt their yoga practice helped nurture their resilience. This study utilized the literature centered on teacher stress, burnout, and the effects of yoga on the brain. Moreover, in this research I employed van Manen's (2017) lens of the phenomenology of lived experiences to extrapolate meaning from those experiences in order to answer the research question: How do novice teachers view their yoga practice as contributing to resilience in the face of stressful teaching situations that might lead some to leave the profession?

### **Discussion of Key Findings**

The metaphorical representations conveyed how participants viewed their novice teacher experience, and they also gave an understanding of the remedies they sought during their novice teaching experience. My researcher's journal was used to note the environmental conditions and changes during the interviews as well as the reactions of the participants as certain questions were posed. For example, when asked if certain co-workers required the use of yogic concepts, several participants smiled as if a particular

person was called to mind. At times, participants responses led to other wonderings which were documented to revisit later. The journal was also used to help me go back to note the actual benefits of the poses participants selected. During the interviews, participants elaborated in great detail about the daily stressors they experience in their job as classroom teachers.

Participants reported that they regularly experienced burnout, but added that practicing yoga allowed them to maintain equilibrium and not succumb to stressors. Not all participants practice yoga at the same frequency. All participants shared how the stress of teaching does not allow for yet another thing to be added to their already full load but interestingly, all were practicing yoga before they starting their teaching careers.

Participants shared their motivations for starting a yoga practice, with most mentioning that it was to help them overcome some life challenges they were experiencing at the time (i.e. stress, depression, anxiety, etc.). Since yoga is something that helped them in the past, they find themselves returning as a novice teacher to a tool that helped them survive other stressful times. Downward Facing Dog acknowledged, “I’ve tried to continue [yoga] as often as I can, but it’s not always continuous because life gets in the way.” Other participants echoed this sentiment as they referred to yoga as a tool they could always go back to when they need it. The findings were presented through the use of participant quotes to accurately capture their experiences. The respective key findings that emerged from the data include: (a) Reset, (b) Reflection, and (c) Non-Attachment.

A combination of stress and resilience were used as lenses for this study as illustrated in the conceptual framework. As novice teachers are inundated by unavoidable stressors, how they respond to those stressors determine if they build resilience or

succumb to burnout. These findings are also supported by the explanatory framework that was developed by Streeter et al. (2012). His framework posits that yoga fosters a reduction in stress-related allostatic load on the autonomic and GABA systems. Reducing the “wear and tear” of the body from repeated activation of physiological mechanisms in response to stress becomes critical in novice teachers decision to remain in the classroom. However the research revealed that efforts to reduce stress must also seek to improve protective factors, often framed in terms of resilience. Included among those protective factors are participation in well-being activities that can be found in yoga practice (Prilleltensky et al., 2016). Resilience was once thought of as an innate characteristic, but research later confirmed that resilient qualities can be learned or acquired (Gu & Day, 2007). Findings from the Gu and Day (2007) study suggest that teacher resilience is a necessary condition for teacher effectiveness. Resilient teachers feel a sense of agency that promotes perceptions of value and control allowing them to feel empowered and helps to sustain their motivation and commitment to the profession (Gu & Day, 2007).

### **Reset**

We learn from the research about the role that yoga plays in allowing us to empty our bodies of stored stress. Like the participants in this study, Stern (2019) compares yoga to a wringing out process much like that of a sponge. Once a sponge soaks up dirty liquid the only way to clear that sponge is by running clean water through it and repeatedly wringing it out. Asana practice offers a similar process. “We are methodically wringing out our stress and stiffness from our bodies, and clearing the mind in the process” (Stern, 2019, p.54).

The polyvagal theory (PVT) also provides a neurophysiological explanation of the participants' feelings where they explained how yoga provides them the ability to empty everything out and start anew. PVT posits that yoga works as a mind-body practice that connects all three polyvagal neural platforms: physiological states, psychological attributes, and social processes. Yoga provides the accessibility to novice teachers in controlling these neural platforms allowing them to feel cognitively clear. Sullivan et al. (2018) contend that yoga then becomes a way for teachers to exercise these neural pathways in order to help them build resilience. In speaking about a particular yoga class that Downward Facing Dog attends, she remarked in regards to the yoga teacher "I don't know how she does it, but it just gets you in this place where it connects mind, body, and soul. It's just amazing!" In his book, *One Simple Thing* (2019), Eddie Stern noted, "somehow, given the opportunity, the body knew how to correct imbalances. And even more interesting, it was apparent that the yoga poses didn't even have to be done 'well' or 'right' for these positive effects to happen" (p. 4).

Beyond asana, other aspects of yoga also allow practitioners to produce positive changes in the brain. Focus and breathing meditations have been linked to increases in gamma and beta brain waves which are responsible for increases in cognitive skills (Desai et al., 2015; Simpkins & Simpkins, 2014). Open-focus meditation has been linked to increases in alpha waves which correlates with relaxed attention and restful alertness. Hepburn and McMahon (2017) established that yoga breathing reduced the perceived level of stress in a sampling of full-time teachers. Participants reported feeling more in control of their emotions and better able to focus. Eagle reported, "difficult people require immense amounts of patience and compassion." She explained that when she

encounters a co-worker yoga has helped her actively analyze in the moment to temper an immediate reaction of anger and frustration. She does this by reflecting on “why am I angry? What did they do? What do they really mean by it? Are they actually trying to upset me?” This cognitive process allows her to remain in control of her emotions while expressing compassion in seeking solutions in challenging situations.

Study participants echoed the findings from the literature in how they relied on yoga practice to help sustain their mental well-being. Participants noticed the difference in how they felt when they did not practice yoga over the course of the week in comparison to when they did. Child’s Pose I noted, “two weeks ago I was sick so I only practiced once and I just barely made it through that week.” This study revealed that all participants relied on yoga practice to help them empty stress and rely on muscle memory through practice to temporarily suspend decision-making which they are over-burdened with and rest their cognitive functioning.

### **Reflection**

Teachers high in SEC are better able to sense the changing of emotions in students and other adults in the school context and can properly react to those changes. This skill helps novice teachers learn not to be completely reactive and punitive when responding to student misbehavior. In turn, teacher modeling of this skill informally teaches students how to process conflict and problem solving which ultimately contributes to a healthy functioning classroom environment. The bidirectional relationship model presented by Jennings and Greenburg (2009) illustrates the transactional relationship of teachers and students. When teachers are able to create

positive relationships with students, this translates into positive academic outcomes for students.

Research conducted by Lazar et al. (2005) indicated that meditation is associated with increased thickness of the insular cortex, an area in the brain responsible for empathy, compassion, fairness, and cooperation. The cingulate gyrus, a node where moods and emotions are regulated, was also affected by meditation as suggested in a later study conducted by Simpkins and Simpkins (2014). Streeter et al. (2007) found there was an increase in  $\gamma$ -amniobutyric (GABA) levels that attributes changes in improved mood and decreased levels of anxiety results typically found with the use of pharmacologic agents.

As noted by van Woerkom (2010), critical reflection in adult education is a crucial element in the learning process of individuals and organizations. She informs us that everyday learning is a complex blend of implicit and explicit learning and reflection and suggests that we find ways to think of learning that acknowledge the importance of emotions and unconscious learning.

Participants in this study shared how yoga allows them not to overreact to situations and helps them to reflect on the totality of emotionally charged situations. Often their reflection helps them be more empathetic towards students and colleagues which helps them to foster better relationships. Overall, participants echoed findings from the literature and in particular found that yoga significantly increased their levels of calmness, comfort, and cheerfulness (Nosaka & Okamura, 2015).

## **Non-Attachment**

Through the practice of yoga, teachers are able to learn not to internalize conflicts with others. Non-attachment is an intentional practice of letting go and moving on (Hepburn & McMahon, 2017; Simpkins & Simpkins, 2014). This becomes helpful when dealing with students that exhibit particularly challenging behavior. Participants spoke about these skills helping them to develop the courage to take risks since they were not attached to the outcome. If they failed at something or did not get the results they aimed for, they took that as an opportunity to refine their practice and improve on methods. Tree noted, “it’s like you’re rolling a stone up the hill and it’s trying to press you back down. You have to find a different way to maneuver to keep it from pushing you.” Their yoga practice helped to cultivate their professional identity as well. The constant practice of non-attachment helped novice teachers have more regular positive emotional experiences which are associated with teachers' plans to stay in teaching (Jones & Young, 2012). Because yoga practice neurobiologically changes the way we relate to others, it inadvertently changes our view of ourselves (Sullivan et al., 2018).

Participants often refer to the ability to recognize that conflicts they encounter are not really about them. It allows them to be present in the moment in order to assess situations beyond the physical manifestations presented. This also allows them to be compassionate and more patient with others as well (Tait, 2008).

## **Study Contribution**

There is a gap present in the literature of adult education that specifically addresses using yoga for emotional well-being, increased focus, and resilience. Instead the word mindfulness is typically substituted in its place. As the practice of yoga has

religious roots, perhaps this could be the reason Western authors felt the need to go away from using the word yoga itself. Sun (2019) points out that meditation originated in Eastern ancient traditions and that the practice of yoga is an example of a meditation technique. Sun continues to point out that meditation techniques were Westernized in the 1950's and popularized by Professor Kabat-Zinn when he developed Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction in the 1970's.

Tisdell and Riley (2019) caution adult educators to be aware of the dangers of cultural appropriation, but could the erasure of the terms 'yoga' and 'meditation' be just that? In the context of adult education, one would be hard pressed to see the Eastern terms used. Instead it appears that academia attempts to make the ideas more palatable by using the Westernized term of mindfulness. Some literature even uses the two terms conjunctively as mindfulness and meditation, as in the case when these terms were shortened to M&M by Tisdell and Riley (2019). Hyland (2017) warns about the danger of what he calls "McDonaldizing" mindfulness. The rebranding of an ancient term seems to be the epitome of the commodification he warns of. Using Qi Sun's (2019) article title *Eastern Thoughts, Western Practices* as inspiration, this erasure appears to be a case of Eastern thought and Western colonization coopted by academia at large. The use of the Westernized term, mindfulness, feels like a caricature of yoga.

This study positions a possible solution for building novice teacher resilience that is rooted in ancient Eastern practices. This research, unlike many others, resists the urge to conform by making the term 'yoga' more palatable for academia.

## **Recommendations for Practice**

We live in a world that has increased in technological advancements that can serve as distractions and where multi-tasking has been normalized. This research presented a review of literature as well as participants' experience in how a yoga practice helped them to be more reflective and gain increased self-awareness, and allowed them to increase their overall well-being. These skills help them to become more efficient practitioners, ultimately improving the overall quality of the teacher.

Educators should use the findings from this study to determine ways that elements of yoga can be used to help adults make meaning of their educational experiences and process emotional challenges that may arise. The emergent themes of reset, reflection, and non-attachment can be helpful to many populations beyond K-12 novice teachers. Furthermore, a study by Hepburn and McMahon (2017) documented the perceived reduction of stress with full-time teachers who had more than five years of teaching experience, suggesting to those designing teacher professional development that yoga could be implemented on a wider scale. Similarly, Nosaka and Okamura (2015) conducted a study to assess the effects of a yoga therapy program with school employees, not specific to teachers. Participants in that study showed increased levels of calmness, comfort, and cheerfulness while showing decreases in cognitive mind and body stress (Nosaka & Okamura, 2015).

Post-secondary educators should reflect on this research when building classroom experiences for pre-service teachers as well. Within theories of adult education, reflection is conceptualized as an analytical process through which human beings extract knowledge from their experience (Jordi, 2011). However, Jordi (2011) urged researchers

not to consider reflection as an exclusively cognitive process. He argued that “the embodiment of our experiencing provides us with the tacit knowledge that allows us to know who we are, where we are, and what we are doing without a great amount of thought” (Jordi, 2011, p. 195). He encouraged adult educators to engage with experiential learning to develop reflective practices that facilitate implicit and cognitive elements of the conscious experiencing.

Very little attention is paid to helping future teachers understand the amount of stress that is inherent in the career of teaching—but even more, what can be done about that stress to resist burnout. School districts should also take notice of the underlying problem of teacher attrition so they can discover ways to help develop resiliency in novice teachers as teachers are the most vulnerable to leaving the profession in their early years of teaching. Prilleltensky et al. (2016) implicated the need for programs that include equipping teachers with both motivational and instructional strategies for dealing with stress. Teacher educators should therefore look for more strategic ways to create professional development opportunities that include the use of yoga techniques that have been proven to decrease stress and leads to the perception of resilience.

The experiences of the participants in this study show us that even sporadic yoga practice spread over time can make a difference in how one processes stress and resists burnout. Having yoga gives adults a tool they can always call upon when they are navigating stressful experiences.

### **Future Research**

The first recommendation for future research is to conduct a similar study involving the experiences of K-12 teachers who practice yoga but have been teaching

more than four years. To expand on the study conducted by Hepburn and McMahon (2017), this research could also narrow the scope of participants to those who teach in public school as compared to private school. A comparative study could also be conducted to reflect other teaching contexts as they relate to teaching experiences in different types of school environments (urban vs. suburban, elementary vs. middle school, etc.).

Another idea for future research would be a comparison study done with novice teachers using the results from a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program with those of a yoga program. This could be helpful in examining what similarities and difference exist between the two and whether MBSR yields similar outcomes to yoga. Another type of qualitative study could view the experiences of novice teachers entering the profession experiencing solely traditional professional development as compared to a group who receive a yoga professional development program in addition to those traditionally offered.

### **Researcher's Reflection**

When I started this journey I only knew two things for certain. One, I knew that I wanted to focus on the professional development of K-12 teachers. And two, my experience suggested typical professional development programs alone are not enough to grow teachers and keep them in the career. Being a career educator I knew that what has been done time and time again is not working. I understood that a new approach needed to be taken to help build teacher resilience during their early years in the profession.

Like my participants, I have used yoga throughout the years to help cope with various challenges in my life. Primarily I use it when I feel as though my mind is on

cognitive overload. My experience with yoga echoes those of my participants in that I may not consistently practice but I know it is always there waiting for me in a time of need. Starting this doctoral program while working a full-time cognitively demanding job writing curriculum and training teachers left me feeling drained in every aspect of my life. A professor used a meditation to begin a class during this program, and it reminded me of how good yoga made me feel. I was reminded that I need to be more intentional in my yoga practice and seek it out more if I were to finish this program intact. I had no understanding about why I felt better after completing yoga practice, I just knew how I felt. Working with novice teachers I would hear first-hand some of the emotional turmoil they experienced and I wanted my research to be something that could be used to help develop this population of teachers in particular.

I wrestled with several aspects of the novice teacher experience by including topics such as self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997) alongside professional development. No doubt that Bandura's concept would add the legitimacy that the education world respects. In the attempt to legitimize my research, I was afraid to solely focus on the effectiveness of the practice of yoga. One would be hard-pressed to find the term yoga in the forefront as used in conjunction with adult education in the literature. So I understood that my using this term exclusively was taking a risk.

I am grateful to colleagues and professors who encouraged me to take the leap and not hide yoga under layers of self-efficacy and mindfulness. As study participants shared their experiences I understood that there was no need to hide yoga under another name. As the phenomena of the participants' lived experiences unfolded, I realized yoga

deserved a place in academia and it no longer needs to be subsumed under the term mindfulness.

Through this research I was able to offer a glimpse into the novice teacher experience in hopes to offer school districts, administration, and pre-service programs a way to understand how they better serve this population of teachers. My intention for this research is for those responsible for training teachers to recognize the usefulness of an ancient Eastern practice and be bold enough to implement it in teacher professional development.

## APPENDIX SECTION

### APPENDIX A

#### SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW ONE

In order to help to establish rapport, each participant will be asked in advance to think of a yoga pose that serves as a metaphor for their novice teacher experience and be prepared to perform this pose upon our meeting. At the start of the first interview each participant will share their metaphorical representation. The pose they select will become their pseudonym.

1. Tell me about your teaching context (e.g. grade level, subject taught, urban/rural/suburban, student demographics, school diversity)?
2. What led you to become a teacher?
3. Preface: Lots of teachers find that when they start teaching, it is really different from what they expected it to be. Since becoming a teacher, have you ever experienced this sort of reality shock?
  - a. If you have had that experience, can you tell me about when /what happened that brought you to that realization?
4. On a typical teaching day, how would you rank your level of stress on a scale from 1-5 and why?
  - a. What are some of the stressors you face?
5. Has there ever been a time when you wondered if you were experiencing teacher burnout?
  - a. Probe: If so, can you tell what led you feel that way and how you dealt with that?

6. Can you give me one or more examples of coping mechanisms you have developed to deal with your stress as a teacher?
  - a. Probe: Can you explain how this works for you?
7. Were you already a teacher at the time when you began practicing yoga?
  - a. Probe: What motivated your yoga practice? Please tell me when you first started practicing yoga and how that came about.
8. What type of yoga do you prefer, and why?
9. Who else, if anyone, do you practice yoga with (such as family, friends or coworkers)?
10. What are some of the ways you have learned yoga, either initially, or to improve your practice?
11. When practicing yoga, what do you find yourself focused most on (pose, breathing, balance, meditation, etc.)?
12. In what ways would you say your practice of yoga impacts your stress level?
13. How do you find your practice of yoga (asana) blending into other aspects of your thinking off the mat?

## APPENDIX B

### SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW TWO

This interview will last approximately 60 minutes saving time by sending transcripts, the participant's member profiles, and preliminary interpretations from the first interview prior to the scheduled meeting time to allow for review. At the start of interview, two participants will be asked for their thoughts, feelings, and feedback regarding the collection of data that took place during interview one and the preliminary analysis shared in advance. This member-checking conversation may constitute as much as half of the interview.

1. In what ways does your yoga practice manifest itself in your professional relationships (colleagues, parents, students, community members, stakeholders, etc.)?
  - a. Can you recall a defining moment in any of these professional relationships where there was a noticeable shift that you associate to your yoga practice?
2. Can you give me an example of how you bring your yoga practice into the classroom?
  - a. Probe: Can you expand on that a bit?
3. Are there particular people at work that you regularly encounter with whom you find yourself applying yogic principles in your interactions more than with others?
  - a. Is there anything you do in order to prepare for encounters with them? Can you tell me about an experience with the preparation?

4. How do you understand the term resilience?
  - a. Probe: Has this meaning for you changed at any point? How?
5. In what ways do you see yourself as resilient?
  - a. Probe: Has this changed for you at any point?
6. What factors do you believe led you to viewing yourself as resilient?
7. Do you think others perceive you as resilient? Can you give me an example of when someone has made an observation to this effect?

## APPENDIX C

### RECRUITMENT LETTER



To: XXX  
From: Dana Fitzpatrick [daf88@txstate.edu]  
Subject: Research Participation Invitation: How Yoga Practice Affects Novice Teacher Resilience

Dear XXX,

This email message is an approved request for participation in research that has been approved by the Texas State Institutional Review Board (IRB).

You are invited to participate in a research study that seeks to understand how novice teachers perceive yoga practice as contributing to their development of resilience. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are currently a K-12 classroom teacher who practices yoga. A criterion for participation is that you have less than four years of teaching experience. As a participant, you will be invited to take part in two 60-90 minute interview sessions that will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes. Should you volunteer to take part in this study, your interview responses will remain confidential. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

While I cannot point to direct benefits to you from participating in this research, if yoga is perceived by study participants as having a substantial effect on perceived teacher resilience, this would suggest implications for practice. School districts may want to address this by introducing yoga as part of new teacher development activities.

To participate in this research please respond to the [pre-screening survey](#) or to ask questions about this research please contact me at Dana Fitzpatrick, (708) 612-7583 daf88@txstate.edu.

This project [insert IRB Reference Number or Exemption Number] was approved by the Texas State IRB on [insert IRB approval date or date of Exemption]. Pertinent questions or concerns about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the IRB chair, Dr. Denise Gobert 512-716-2652 – ([dgobert@txstate.edu](mailto:dgobert@txstate.edu)) or to Monica Gonzales, IRB Regulatory Manager 512-245-2334 - ([meg201@txstate.edu](mailto:meg201@txstate.edu)).

## APPENDIX D

### CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW



### INFORMED CONSENT

Study Title: Namaste in Teaching: How Yoga Practice Affects Novice Teacher Resilience

Principal Investigator: Dana Fitzpatrick

Co-Investigator/Faculty Advisor: Dr. Jovita Ross-Gordon and Dr. Joellen Coryell

Email: [daf88@txstate.edu](mailto:daf88@txstate.edu)

Email: [jross-gordon@txstate.edu](mailto:jross-gordon@txstate.edu)  
[coryell@txstate.edu](mailto:coryell@txstate.edu)

Phone: (708) 612-7583

Phone: 512-245-8084; 512-245-1856

This consent form will give you the information you will need to understand why this research study is being done and why you are being invited to participate. It will also describe what you will need to do to participate as well as any known risks, inconveniences or discomforts that you may have while participating. We encourage you to ask questions at any time. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and it will be a record of your agreement to participate. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

#### **PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND**

You are invited to participate in a research study that seeks to understand how novice teachers perceive yoga practice contributing to the development of resilience. You are being asked to take part in this study because you are currently a K-12 classroom teacher who practice yoga and have less than four years of teaching experience. Should you volunteer to take part in this study, your responses to the demographic survey and interview will be used, but will remain confidential. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

#### **PROCEDURES**

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in two interviews and complete one short demographic survey in paper form distributed during the initial interview. Each interview will be scheduled for a convenient time and place for the participant and in a location that is comfortable and free from distractions. Each interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes during which time you will be asked to respond to interview questions that pertain to your experience as a novice teacher that practices yoga. The total time commitment for participation in this study is expected to be

approximately 120-180 minutes (2-3 hours). The interview will be audio-recorded and the researcher may take notes as well.

### **RISKS/DISCOMFORTS**

There is little risk in participating in this study as you will not be discussing sensitive data (i.e. illegal drug use, alcohol abuse, victims of violence, etc.), protected health information, or involve the use of deception. However, during the interview you may become uncomfortable in sharing certain experiences with the investigator. Should you feel uncomfortable, you may choose to not answer any of the questions.

The demographic survey will include a section that asks for information that means participants will not be anonymous to me as the researcher or members of the research team. As the investigator, I will make every effort to protect the participant's confidentiality. Your name or place of employment will not be attached to any other study documents. However, should you feel uncomfortable at any time revealing certain information, you may choose to refrain from answering any question.

In the unlikely event that some of the survey or interview questions make you uncomfortable or upset, you are always free to decline to answer or to stop your participation at any time.

### **BENEFITS/ALTERNATIVES**

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, if yoga is perceived by study participants as having a substantial effect on perceived teacher resilience, this would suggest implications for practice. School districts may want to address this by introducing yoga as part of new teacher development activities.

### **EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

Reasonable efforts will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private and confidential. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. The members of the research team identified here and the Texas State University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) may access the data. The ORC monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research participants.

Your name will not be used in any written reports or publications which result from this research. Data will be kept for three years (per federal regulations) after the study is completed and then destroyed.

### **PAYMENT/COMPENSATION**

You will not be paid for your participation in this study.

### **PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY**

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may

withdraw from it at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**QUESTIONS**

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this study, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Dana Fitzpatrick via email at daf88@txstate.edu.

This project IRB Reference Number 6583 was approved by the Texas State IRB on July 3, 2019. Pertinent questions or concerns about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the IRB Chair, Dr. Denise Gobert 512.245.8351 - (dgobert@txstate.edu) or to Monica Gonzales, IRB Regulatory Manager 512.245.2314 - (meg201@txstate.edu).

**DOCUMENTATION OF CONSENT**

I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement and possible risks have been explained to my satisfaction. I understand I can withdraw at any time.

Your participation in this research project may be recorded using audio recording devices. Recordings will assist with accurately documenting your responses. You have the right to refuse the audio recording. Please select one of the following options:

I consent to audio recording:

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Study Participant  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Study Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent  
Date

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