Re-Imagining Wellness in the Age of Neoliberalism

Sarah Badr

Abstract

In this article, I explore the neoliberalization of wellness practices and the negative impact that this has had on the production and consumption of food products otherwise considered 'healthy' and or 'ecofriendly'. Specifically, I argue that capitalist notions of productivity and wellness have become intertwined, resulting in the large-scale destruction of both our environment and of the politically and economically marginalized. First, I examine the capitalist co-option of the concept of self-care and its origins in the 1960s civil rights movement as a response to a discriminatory medical establishment. Afterward, I explore the corporate-led evolution of wellness culture, illustrating its consequences for the environment, and the security and health of marginalized populations around the world. Finally, I argue that holistic and community-centered concepts of productivity and wellness are necessary for combatting inequality and climate crisis.

Introduction

Over the past several decades, wellness culture has taken over the mainstream, encouraging people around the world, particularly in the west, to improve their health and increase their happiness through their participation in practices of so-called self-care, such as dieting, meditation, and yoga. As of 2019, the wellness industry was valued at $3.5 billion and growing (Global Institute of Wellness, 2019). The exponential growth of this industry can be attributed to the physical, emotional, and mental health toll of life in today's late capitalist society, including political instability, deeply entrenched social inequality, and the rapid degradation of our environment. Backed by corporate interests, the culture promoted through these wellness industries advances the idea that optimal health and wellness, and by extension, happiness, are achievable through dieting, exercising, and spiritual practices, often with an accompanying moralistic rhetoric. This rhetoric implies that partaking in these practices is a matter of moral judgement, which reflects the values and goodness of the individual, as is exemplified, for example, in notions such as "clean eating", and the counter "dirty eating" that the term invokes.

Such framing of self-care practices not only conflates happiness with morality and narrow definitions of health, but it ignores the multitude of sociological factors that influence health, including access to food, medicine, and a safe environment. This is indicative of an inherent problem within wellness culture, which places an emphasis on the importance of the "self", while negating the interconnectedness of the self with one's greater social, historical, political, and ecological community. Accordingly, this article offers an intervention into prevailing wellness discourse by exploring how the wellness industry plays into a cultural dis-ease about modern life, while promoting neoliberal narratives about self-care and personal improvement. First, I examine the capitalist co-option of the concept of self-care and its origins in the 1960s civil rights movement as a response to a discriminatory medical establishment. Afterward, I explore the corporate-led evolution of wellness culture, illustrating its consequences for the environment, and the security and health of marginalized communities around the world. Finally, I conclude by arguing that holistic and community-centered, or decolonized, concepts of productivity and wellness are necessary for combatting inequality and climate crisis.

The history of self-care and the rise of capitalist spirituality

One of the driving forces of wellness culture has been the notion of self-care, primarily through the consumption of various lifestyle products and behaviours to improve personal health and happiness. While the practice has arguably become a way for some people to indulge in shallow and materialistic lifestyle changes, self-care as a concept was first introduced in the 1950s as a medical concept for patients to foster greater health through personal habits (Harris, 2017). The concept then expanded as a way for workers in emotionally taxing professions, such as therapy and social work, to mitigate the accompanying levels of increased stress. In the 1960s, with the rise of the women's and civil rights movement, self-care was transformed into a political act that was not only conducive, but necessary, for effective transformative activism: in the face of a racist and patriarchal medical establishment that failed to provide equal care and to fully acknowledge the needs of marginalized groups, controlling one's health via self-care was a way for these groups to reclaim their autonomy (Lorde, 1988; Harris, 2017).

In the context of her cancer diagnoses, Black Feminist writer Audre Lorde (1988) famously proclaimed that, within this harmful medical culture: "caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare" (p. 205). Similarly, the Black Panther Party, who also viewed self-care as a revolutionary concept, gave speeches and shared information about free community service programs, including basic preventative care, to compensate for the lack of adequate care available to Black Americans. These initiatives

prioritized basic survival needs, and recognized poverty and poor health as correlating forces that required community action, rather than relying on moralistic individualism and a discriminatory medical healthcare system. In other words, they posited that the ability to live healthy lives required the dismantling of oppressive hierarchies. It is no wonder then, that, decades later, Black feminist activist and artist Sonya Renee Taylor (2018) has taken to reminding us of the power of self-care with her seminal book *The Body Is not an Apology*, inspired by her company of the same name, with widespread success: the novel is explicitly committed to reclaiming the practice of self-care (or self-love) and reuniting it with its radical, anti-oppressive roots.

Unfortunately, however, the evolution of radical self-care throughout the 1960s to 1980s coincided with an emerging wellness trend, which focused, not on the need to grant marginalized communities better access to basic healthcare, but rather, on a hallow disillusionment with traditional western medicine. "Borrowing" heavily from Eastern religious and spiritual practices that were introduced by the New Age movement (acts now considered to be cultural appropriation), this wellness culture proposed the idea of healthiness as more than simply an absence of illness; it emphasized the responsibility all individuals have to both maintain and better their health. Largely described as the culture of "healthism" by critical health scholars (Carter, 2015), this framing coincided with the rise of neoliberal economics, with an increased importance and responsibility placed on individuals for the state of their health.

Healthism is a term coined by Robert Crawford (1980) to describe 'a particular form of 'bodyism'; in which a hedonistic lifestyle is (paradoxically) combined with a preoccupation with ascetic practices aimed at the achievement or maintenance or appearance of health, fitness and youthfulness' (Dutton, 1995, p. 273). As Da Costa (2019) observes, "Healthism operates under the assumption that everyone has the obligation to maximize their own well-being, as it ensures the good of society as a whole…Here,

self-care is not considered to be selfish, but rather, representative of one's larger commitment to social welfare" (p. 3). Within this rising regulatory climate of healthism, the pursuit of health and the act of self-care have been increasingly imbued with an agentic quality that is equal parts productive and moralistic. It is thus unsurprising that, in the last few decades, a neoliberal spirituality has started to take form.

As Crockford (2020) notes, spirituality and neoliberalism share certain structural features. Broadly speaking, neoliberalism relies on the selective use of ideological assumptions that work to underscore the importance of self-governance through personal autonomy and individual responsibility (Carter, 2015). Similarly, spirituality is a deregulated religion without central authority or reinforcement that is also privatized, i.e., it is based on personal experiences that are determined by the individual. The actual neoliberalization of spirituality, however, can be said to have begun with the revitalization of religion in western societies a few hundred years ago to reconcile faith with modern scientific knowledge; because science could not measure the private experience of religion, religion became internalized (Purser, 2019). With this, the number of people who identify as "spiritual but not religious" has grown, enabling an excess of practices and material goods to emerge that supposedly represent spirituality, including healthy foods, yoga wear, and workshops (Jain, 2020).

Backed by the rise of healthism, this has prompted a widescale transition into what Jain (2020) calls neoliberal spirituality: a spirituality defined by acts of self-care that are achieved through the dominant actors of spiritual industries, corporations, entrepreneurs, and consumers, who then engender neoliberal modes of governance. A synonym for capitalist spirituality, this new spiritual practice has re-oriented the onus of self-care away from challenging the deeply rooted patterns of inequity etched into our society to reinforcing them, namely by holding individuals as solely responsible and capable of their own

health and happiness.

The political economy of health

Spiritual organizations are located within a history of colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy, yet they mask these histories under new concepts of personal wellness and optimal health, "depoliticizing social inequalities by attributing them to individual moral failures and emphasizing the need for disciplinary obedience and purity" (Jain, 2020, p. 9). In line with healthism rhetoric, wellness culture operates on the moralistic assumption that participation is a personal choice, rather than a privilege dictated by socio-economic and geographic realities. For example, a popular wellness practice, "clean eating", which involves the consumption of organic foods or following a vegan diet, ignores the class privilege associated with the accessibility to enjoy a wide variety of food products. Indeed, food insecurity is far more likely to occur when compared to clean eating, with the former being exacerbated among Black, Indigenous, and migrant populations by food deserts, which make it especially difficult to acquire the nutritionally rich foods and fresh produce ascribed to the latter. Hence, like the rest of the wellness industry, this rhetoric obfuscates the political nature of who gets to eat what.

Wellness culture also masks the catastrophic effects of the global food industrial complex, while concertedly greenwashing products and practices to make them appear more environmentally friendly than they are, often using plant-based meals, and, to an extent, participation in wellness culture writ large, as a solution to the ecological crisis caused by settler-colonial-capitalism. Through greenwashing, consumers are led to believe that they are being environmentally conscious, when, in fact, they are consuming products that largely perpetuate and exacerbate environmental issues. Further, this is usually done to the cultural and economic harm of the populations who produce the products. For instance, soy products are typically hailed as great, environmentally friendly alternatives to dairy, but the cultivation of soy in

South America, particularly in Brazil (the world's largest exporter of soy, as well as beef and chicken), has been a major factor in accelerating deforestation (Friedman-Rudovsky, 2012). Similarly, the production of almond milk, another popular staple in wellness culture, requires an exorbitant amount of fresh water and has dire consequences for biodiversity. The production of "healthy" grains and produce are similarly problematic, as they typically must travel long distances within our imperial marketplace, which requires various types of fuel, after being harvested by exploited racialized and migrant populations. Not to mention, the west's recent global market demand for quinoa, which has been considered a staple food in Bolivia and Peru for centuries, has priced out locals who have relied on the food as a part of their traditional diet.

Many of the foods named above are dubbed "superfoods" within the wellness industry yet contribute to major sociopolitical harms. Beyond the deep seated violences within food production itself, the assumption that plant-and-grain-based meals are a solution to climate crisis does not consider the reality that different cultural contexts produce varying relationships with food. For instance, in many countries, meat may not be as inexpensive and abundantly available and is thus not as harmful to the environment as, say, the west's meat industries are. Moreover, historically collectivist societies, such as those Indigenous to the land now called Canada, often have more harmonious relationships to the land, which are marked by the sustainable cultivation and use of resources, and similarly preserved via traditional ecological knowledge systems. Thus, their consumption of the products that wellness culture would deem "bad for the environment", are, in fact, far more ecologically friendly when compared to the greenwashed products that the west praises. This point is especially important in the context of confounding racial and environmental issues, as many populations in the global south are collectivist, yet are also disproportionately affected by climate crisis, which has been predominately led

by the western world/global north.

Further, just as a deeper examination of how "superfoods" are cultivated and distributed reveals the imperial underbelly of wellness culture, so too does interrogating the culture's push to consume said foods in the first place: it promotes a desire for the products of traditional knowledge within a larger cultural and economic structure that denigrates and commodifies them. The perception of some foods as "superfoods", for instance, is not only nutritionally questionable but results in the fetishization of Indigenous knowledges that is rooted in a desire to participate in more "traditional" ways of life, but from the comfort of western modernity.

Loyer and Knight (2018) illustrate how such "nutritional primitivism" (p. 450) has only worsened social and environmental issues within our current food system. Specifically, they posit that nutritional primitivism intentionally relegates largely racialized and non-western food producers to the realm of "traditional", thereby arresting them in time, which, in turn, obscures and flattens the complexities of agricultural production within the global political economy. Here, tradition, and its ideological twins, exoticness, novelty, and authenticity, are used to racially code health foods so that they can appeal to the wellness industry's white and monied consumers, while simultaneously primitivizing agricultural production within the global south and among migrant workers, who are then easier to exploit. Accordingly, it seems that much of the interest in superfoods is, at least in part, rooted in harmful assumptions and stereotypes about the racial Other.

As modern lifestyles in late capitalist economies entail more distant relationships to the land, food becomes a way to bridge the gap. The food grown and eaten by Indigenous peoples, such as ancient grains, can be seen as informed by a special knowledge, which in the context of the wellness industry, is misappropriated into a generalized avenue by which we (in the west) can get back in touch with the natural, pre-modern world. In other words, consuming these foods becomes a way to be part of these seemingly "ancient" traditions, a framing which, ironically, is laden with the same racist-temporal rhetoric that constitutes late western modernity – the same social milieu that the wellness industry promises us escape from. What we are being sold, then, is not a return to pre-modernity, but rather, modernity masquerading as its opposite so that we can feel better about ourselves without being accountable to others.

While writing about today's food commodity culture, hooks (2014) poignantly states that:

> ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture…from the standpoint of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, the hope is that desires for the "primitive" or fantasies about the Other can be continually exploited, and that such exploitation will occur in a manner that reinscribes and maintains the status quo (p. 366).

Consuming superfoods, grown in "far away" places by racialized peoples with stronger – even supernatural – connections to the Earth, becomes a way to bestow a closeness to these lands and the people who occupy them, without ever actually contending with the reality of living in a settler colonial state or amid an imperialized social order conditioned by white supremacy. The west's connection to the land only extends to the consumption of superfoods, rather than to the people who produce them. Within this context, the almost religious ways that people follow "clean" lifestyles, undergirded by the logics of healthism or environmental friendliness, becomes a way to reinforce one's morality, without questioning the effects of one's consumption.

The Mindfulness Revolution

Another example of how the desire to utilize the cultural knowledge and products of non-western groups to "cultivate the self" maintains and bolsters the success of the wellness industry, is evident in the rise of mindfulness meditation. Beginning in the late 1970s, the west started to remanufacture the Buddhist tradition of

mindfulness meditation as a potential science, which ultimately resulted in its secularization and subsequent appropriation (Purser, 2019). Secular mindfulness movements reduce the Buddhist practice into a therapeutic response to the mental pressures associated with modern lifestyles under the west's capitalist regime instead of honoring them as deeply spiritual and cultural mechanisms (which would, in fact, challenge the consumerist and exploitative logics of western capitalism).

Carette and King (2005) argue that Asian wisdoms and traditions have been subject to colonialization and commodification through such secular wellness techniques since as early as the 18th century, whereby they have been diametrically used to produce a highly individualistic spirituality that accommodates and aligns with western dominant cultural values (such as individualism, consumerism, self-discipline). Purser (2019) links the formalization of this process back to 1979 when Jon Kabat Zinn founded his Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical School (MBSR) and created an 8-week mindfulness course for stress reduction that would be taught using a standardized curriculum. Although likely well intended, the popularity of Kabat-Zinn's therapy expanded the reach of MBSR into the mainstream by identifying new markets, such as corporations, schools, governments, but also the military, which shifted mindfulness mediation into mainstream society during the 1980s and 1990s.

While MBSR has been widely accepted as aiding in the reduction of stress for many people, the separation of mindfulness from its traditionally spiritual context has led to some questionable uses. The value of practices such as mindfulness, for example, ought to include the capacity to prompt individuals to reflect on deeper issues within our material reality, like the fundamental structural issues in our society and the causes of dis-ease that have accompanied modernity, neoliberalism, and the increasing capitalist control over our lives, mind, bodies, and souls. But instead, the neoliberal approach to mindfulness has transformed it into a mainstream

effort to neutralize the emancipatory potential of mindfulness practices (Purser, 2019). So far divorced from its roots, a practice meant to increase empathy and connection with others is now used to improve the efficiency of soldiers on the capitalist battlefield, literally and figuratively.

The neoliberal capture of this spiritual technology has served to neutralize its affectual, ethical, and communal power by removing it from its original context and purpose, resulting in what Purser and Loy (2013) call "McMindfulness" (para 6). More than disconnected from its spiritual and religious roots, McMindfulness denotes how mindfulness practices have been (re)located to the broader positive psychology industry whereby stress is "depoliticized and privatized" (Purser, 2019, p. 8). McMindfulness is attractive to governments and corporations because societal problems rooted in inequality, such as racism, poverty, addiction, substance abuse, and socially manufactured mental health challenges writ large, can be reframed as an individual psychology that simply requires more therapeutic help (and not any structural transformation).

The rise in McMindfulness was accelerated by the corresponding rise of the popular psychology movement, which similarly emphasizes individual problems over structural issues. Rooted particularly in Stoicism, a philosophy of strengthening oneself through practices of self-discipline so to adapt to adversity, western mental health therapies embody the same healthism elements of wellness culture that valorize individual autonomy, freedom, choice, and relatedly, authenticity (read racial primitivism) (Cloninger, Salloum & Mezzich, 2012; Madsen, 2014). In turn, psychologists and other mental health practitioners often fail to consider the psychological and physiological effects of racism, sexism, classism, and ableism on mental health and, inadvertently, obscure our capacity to understand individual suffering in the light of major historical and political changes. This is especially insidious given that the same structural issues within the medical establishment that

produce dire health outcomes for marginalized groups are also reflected, if not amplified, in mental health care (Snowden, 2003).

Within this climate, self-care practices, such as mindfulness, tend to become a means through which to propagate neoliberal modes of governmentality, otherwise known as a "technology of self" (Da Costa, 2019, p. 3). Based on the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault (1997), governmentality is a term that describes how prevailing knowledge systems are developed to promote self-regulation in line with dominant modes of governance, exhorting a style of government that extends beyond mere political activity. Relatedly, technologies of the self are the actions individuals make to "transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault, 1988, p. 18) – a goal that is itself set by the standards of the prevailing governmental structure.

In our current social milieu, this has given rise to what is commonly called "neoliberal governmentality" (Roy, 2007; Carter, 2015), which describes how we understand and control our bodies in relation to neoliberal regimes, including "the technologies of power by which neoliberal rationality is imposed onto individual consciousness" (Da Costa, 2019, p. 2). It is from here that healthism emerged and, by extension, the corresponding positioning of mindfulness especially and self-care more generally as a technology of the self: under healthism, people use the technology of self-care to accomplish a state of idealized healthiness established under neoliberal governmentality, which then ensures the creation of subjects whose understanding of self is fostered in alignment with the larger economic production goals of free-market capitalism.

As one such technology of the self, mindfulness draws upon diverse forms of institutional expertise to govern and manage behaviours. Philosopher Byung Chul Han (2017) illustrates this point well by highlighting how contemporary capitalism has repurchased mindfulness in order to harness the psyche as a "productive force". In so doing, he reveals how the rise of both wellness culture and popular psychology within the western world has ultimately enabled a body to mind shift that has further supported the development of neoliberal governmentality. Specifically, he argues that the increasing emphasis placed on mindfulness and self-care is centered less on the ability to overcome physical, spiritual, and or emotional wounds, and more on the ability to optimize the psychic processes of the late-stage capitalist employee, who is underpaid and overworked (Chul Han, 2017). Through these optimizing forces, Chul Han explains, consumers of contemporary mindfulness therapies can keep functioning and producing within (and for) the same capitalist systems that hurts them. Further, the internalized character of mindfulness practices may also lead to the internalization of other prevailing systems and beliefs, from corporate requirements to structures of dominance in society, culminating into a submissive position that is framed as liberation. Thus, instead of setting practitioners free, mindfulness helps them adjust – if not become complacent – to the very conditions that caused their problems.

The future of wellness

Neoliberal spirituality perpetuates values that equate salvation and liberation with capitalist class structures, whiteness, patriarchy, and ableism (Jain, 2020). Instead of encouraging transformative action within communities and societies, wellness practices generally promote the idea that health and wellbeing are problems that are exclusively within our control, rather than a product of the political and economic contexts that bolster and maintain our destructive society. By failing to address collective suffering and incite the systemic change that might remove it, capitalist spirituality robs mindfulness of its real revolutionary potential.

Jain (2020) asks: "what are the daily, monthly or annual activities through which many spiritual consumers create and condition their bodies and construct identities and communities? How can

these be politically subversive? Could they constitute forms of political dissent?" (p. 10). To begin to think through this question, I have argued that within today's neoliberal capitalist system, which emphasizes self-improvement and self-optimization for the purposes of increased economic and market productivity, there is no truly genuine healing modality. In the case of mindfulness and other psychotherapies, their effects have been neutralized by healthism culture, which relocates the source of unwellness within individuals, rather than addressing any of the structural reasons for dis-ease. So, while these practices may provide aid to some degree, in the context that these consumer practices take place, they can hardly be seen as subversive.

Ultimately, the evolution of wellness culture is a response to the problems of life in late capitalist society, including the pace of modern lifestyles, along with a disillusionment with the capacity of the medical system to holistically address dis-ease and illness (Kristensen, 2017). Despite originally being used as a radical way to reclaim autonomy in the face of discrimination, modern hegemonic understandings of wellness have evolved to reinforce the same structural issues that exacerbate, if not condition, poor health and disease. These new understandings pointedly place the onus onto individuals to improve their lives, promoting commodity culture in ways that harm the same groups that wellness practices were intended to help.

This is not to suggest that mindfulness and wellness practices cannot support us in achieving liberation. In a recent interview with Afropunk, well known Black feminist and abolitionist Angela Davis (2018) discussed self-care as a radical act that is not only necessary for the longevity of the individual, but the longevity of collective movements. She argues that for Black activists and organizers in particular, self-care is a way to fully immerse oneself in the present moment, and thus wholly give oneself to the work (Davis, 2018). She also suggests that it is a way to connect with the past, while laying down a deliberate foundation for future activists. These remarks echo the sentiments of Lorde (1988) and

Taylor (2018) cited above, who also both advocate for a radical self-care that is located within the social justice ethos of Black feminism. When viewed like this, self-care returns to its origins as an integral practice for supporting the collective liberation of life and as thus a counter to the wellness industry.

But as it stands, wellness culture practices often foster complacency among the world's richest populations, while perpetuating harm against marginalized groups and the environment. There is therefore a dire need to continue interrogating the harmful neoliberal assumptions currently undergirding wellness and self-care practices. Most of all, there is a need to decolonize the concept of wellness by shifting our understanding of health back to its radical origins and towards a more holistic mindset. Decolonization refers to the process of addressing and rectifying the colonial power dynamics that shape much of the modern world's political, economic, and societal relations. Similarly, decolonizing wellness practices would involve decentering the white-settler-colonial-neoliberal notion of self-care that currently underpins mainstream wellness culture (Forristal, 2021). In turn, wellness practitioners could start to honor the histories and creators of various wellness practices, and therefore reimburse the communities who have had their cultures and spiritualities appropriated and fetishized, and their labour subsequently exploited. It would also re-orient wellness practices from being primarily based in an individualistic consumer culture, towards being rooted in a community of radical care.

A decolonized approach to wellness would consider the deeply intimate relationship between individual health and planetary health, while concertedly approaching our current ecological crisis as a consequence of our separation from the self, each other, and the environment via white supremacist-capitalist-cis-heteropatriarchy (Tuck & Wayne Yang, 2012). Specifically, we need to develop an integral understanding of the genesis of ill health and disease (particularly in the west) and continue to unpack and honor how health and

disease relate to one's access to basic survival needs, such as food and water, and its role in shaping, and being shaped by, basic human rights, such as education and a safe environment. When viewed in this way, pursuing health and wellness becomes a steppingstone, not a hindrance, to liberation.

Relatedly, the present desire within wellness culture for the products of traditional knowledge can be viewed, not as decolonial or anti-western, but as a modern colonialized response to the separation felt by consumers in the Anthropocene: a geological era defined by the impact of human beings on their environment.[1] The desire for more "primitive" or "authentic" ways of living and connecting to the self is a product of our modern western culture that prioritizes productivity, efficiency, and material consumption over our relationship to the Earth and its natural resources, while also arresting racialized and colonialized populations in time. Hence, the ascent of wellness culture can be thought to be the growing desire for a sustainable life in balance with the external environment, but which is achieved in antithetical, and deeply racist, ways. The balance that wellness practitioners seek will not be found here, as we cannot rebalance our lives with nature without also dispelling the excesses of commodity culture and the unrelenting stress and injustice caused by western capitalism.

A core consequence of late western modernity has been to maintain the primacy of science, thus separating human beings from the ecosystem from which they are naturally a part of. This separation from nature, fueled by the industrial revolution and cemented by neoliberal capitalism, has only further reinforced our lack of balance within ourselves, each other, and the environment. The individualistic and market-centred logic promoted across the neoliberal west is not conducive to an authentic health and wellness. A holistic approach requires decolonialization and would similarly merge the benefits of traditional knowledge with the technological advancements of western science and medicine to not only make this knowledge accessible and historically informed (thus acknowledging and reimbursing all its creators) but ensure that everyone can benefit from its fruits. Such an approach would be built upon mutuality, supporting cross-cultural collaboration without also reinforcing unequal colonial power dynamics. To foster the transformative potential of wellness practices, and thus ensure collective and environmental health and wellbeing, there needs to be action towards ensuring that the most marginalized people have access, first and foremost, to the basic rights that ensure good health. Ultimately, achieving this level of balance will require us to move beyond the narrow understanding of health and wellness promoted by neoliberal governmentality and capitalist spirituality.

---

[1] Importantly, I employ this concept in conjunction with those scholars who have heavily contested it for its even attribution of ecological responsibility, and subsequently flattening the racial and colonial dynamics undergirding modern western society (Davis et. al, 2019; Yusoff, 2019). I thus recognize the Anthropocene as it is (under white settler colonialism and western imperialism) and not as it is often used within much of the literature.

References

Afropunk. (2018, Dec 7). Radical Self Care [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1cHoL4vaBs&t=3s

Carette, J. & King, R. (2005). *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Carter, E. D. (2015) Making the blue zones: Neoliberalism and nudges in public health promotion. *Social Science & Medicine, 133*, 374–382

Crawford, R. (1980). Healthism and the Medicalization of Everyday Life. *International Journal of Health Services*, *10*(3), 365-388

Crockford, S. (2020). What Do Jade Eggs Tell Us about the Category "Esotericism"? Spirituality, Neoliberalism, Secrecy, and Commodities. *New Approaches to the Study of Esotericism*, *17*(3), 201-216

Davis, J., Moulton, A., Van Sant, L., & Williams, B. (2019). Anthropocene, Capitalocene,…Plantationocene?: A Manifesto for Ecological Justice in an Age of Global Crises. *Geography Compass, 13,*1-15

Dutton, K. R. (1995). *The Perfectible Body: The Western Ideal of Physical Development*. London: Cassell.

Da Costa, J. C. R. (2019). Binge-watching: Self-care or self-harm? Understanding the health subjectivities of binge-watchers. *Journal of Health Psychology*, *26*(9), 1–13.

Foucault, M. (1997) Security, territory, and population. In: Rabinow, P (Eds.), *Michel Foucault: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (pp. 67-71). New York: The New Press.

Foucault, M. (1988). Technologies of the self. In: Martin L.H. and Gutman, H (Eds.), *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (pp. 16-49). Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.

Friedman-Rudovsk, J. (2012, April 3). For Bolivian Farmers, Quinoa Boom is Boon and Bane. *Time Magazine*. http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2110890,00.html

The Global Wellness Institute. (2019). 2019 Global Wellness Report https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/industry-research/

Han, B. C. (2017). *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power*. London, United Kingdom: Verso.

Harris, A. (2017). The History of Self-Care. *Slate*. http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2017/04/the_history_of_self_care.html

hooks, b. (2014). *Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance*. In *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. London, UK: Routledge

Jain, A. (2020). *Peace Love Yoga: The Politics of Global Spirituality*. London, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

Lorde, A. (1988). *A Burst of Light: Essays*. Ithaca, New York: Firebrand Books.

Loyer, J. & Knight, C. (2018). Selling the "Inca superfood": nutritional primitivism in superfoods books and maca marketing. *Food, Culture & Society, 21*, 449- 467

Madsen, O. J. (2014). *The Therapeutic Turn: How Psychology Altered Western Culture*. New York, NY: Routledge

Purser, R. (2019). *McMindfulness: How Mindfulness Became the New Capitalist Spirituality*. London, United Kingdom: Repeater

Purser, R. (2018). Critical perspectives on corporate mindfulness. *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion, 16,*1-5

Purser, R. & Loy, D. (2013). Beyond McMindfulness. *The Huffington Post*. July 1 2013. www.huffpost.com/entry/beyond-mcmindfulness_b_3519289

Snowden, L. R. (2003). "Bias in Mental Health Assessment and Intervention: Theory and Evidence", *American Journal of Public Health, 93*(2), 239-243

Taylor, S. R. (2018). *The Body Is Not an Apology*, Second Edition: The Power of Radical Self-Love. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Tuck, E. & Wayne Yang, K. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, *1*(1), 1-40

Yusoff, K. (2019). *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Acknowledgments

Author Biography

Sarah Badr is a writer and researcher based in Toronto, Ontario. Her research interests include the political economy of health, political ecology, science and technology studies and critical theory. She holds a B.A (Hons) and M.A in Political Science from York University.