

How does living as part of a Buddhist community effect conceptions of happiness in both Eastern and Western cultures? A qualitative exploration.

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## How does living as part of a Buddhist community effect conceptions of happiness in both Eastern and Western cultures? A qualitative exploration

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### Abstract

A review of the literature revealed happiness to be a promising area of research (Pavot, 2008), and specifically the study of happiness within the context of culture due to the construction of meaning through indigenous psychologies and language (Bruner, 1990; Heelas & Lock, 198; Suh & Oishi). The current research explored Buddhist conceptions of happiness and comprised two phases; Phase 1 took place in Chiang Rai, Thailand, using informal ethnographic semi-structured interviews; and Phase 2 took place in Manchester, UK, using similar in-depth interviews. Conceptions of happiness were found to be directly

linked to notions of the self and were interpreted through an analytic framework of Sampson's (1988) theories of individualism, whereby both Eastern and Western Buddhist communities used collectivist ensembled individualism, and some aspects of exclusive self-contained individualism, to explain conceptions of the self and happiness. Thematic analysis, informed by Braun & Clarke (2006), found Buddhist conceptions of happiness were linked to a felt connection to the environment, felt connection to other people, a cultivation of positive personal qualities, and an understanding of relative and absolute happiness. Implications may be significant with the areas of happiness studies, community psychology, and positive psychology, as a critical social psychological perspective.

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Manchester Metropolitan University | All Saints | Manchester | M15 6BH

[e-space@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:e-space@mmu.ac.uk) | Tel +44 (0) 161 247 6106

How does living as part of a Buddhist community effect conceptions of happiness in both Eastern and Western cultures? A qualitative exploration, as we already know, common sense develops dispositive complex.