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the Requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

Department of Buddhist Studies
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**The Science of *Sukha*:
A Scientific Theory on the Buddhist Concept of
Happiness and Human Development**

The logo of Fo Guang University is a circular emblem. It features a central stylized lotus flower with three petals. The text "Fo Guang University" is written in a circular path around the lotus. The logo is semi-transparent and overlaid on the title text.

By

Zachary David Walsh

Supervisor: Dr. Kuo-Wei Liu

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Abstract

There are many engaged Buddhists incorporating science into Buddhism without reference to traditional value structures and there are many Buddhist scholars ignoring or rejecting the ongoing development of Buddhism by scientific research. This paper seeks to avoid these two extremes by constructing a platform upon which Buddhists and scientists can meaningfully advance one another's understanding of happiness and well-being without neglecting important differences. Using an integrative literature review format, research from positive psychology, happiness economics, and contemplative science will be linked to Buddhist ethics, in an effort to delineate the territory and boundaries of Buddhism's engagement to the science of happiness.

Since there is no operational definition for a Buddhist concept of happiness in current scientific literature, this paper will also attempt to lay the foundation for its establishment in three ways: First, it will define happiness in correspondence to the Buddhist concept of *sukha*; second, it will integrate scientific research into a construct that retains the concept's traditional integrity; and third, it will experimentally demonstrate the validity of *sukha* by providing evidence of its functional relevance to lived Buddhist practice. The paper will conclude with a critical analysis of the potential merits of Buddhism's happiness hypothesis in future studies.

Key words:

Sukha 樂, happiness, *eudaimonia*, *chanda*, Buddhism, science, positive psychology, gross national happiness, human development.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the benefit of all sentient beings, both believers and non-believers, in an effort to bring the Buddha Dharma into their lives and create worldly conditions conducive to their salvation.

And to my mother and father, whose love and support empowered me to produce this work.



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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Ecological and Existential Crises

Perhaps nothing has more profoundly shaped modern life than modern economic development. Following the scientific and industrial revolutions, technological advancements enabled improved utilization of material resources and rapidly accelerated the pace of growth and expansion. Since 1800, industrialization inspired a more than 6-fold growth in human population and 10-fold growth in average per capita income worldwide.¹ This global spread of wealth dramatically improved the life expectancy and standard of living for billions of sick and impoverished.²

However, as Helena Norberg-Hodge documents in *Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh*,³ modern economic development is also directly responsible for crippling our capacity to sustain a high quality of life and protect Buddhist lifestyles from development's social, environmental, and psychological harms. Ladakh's modernization reflects the common experience of other pre-industrial societies impacted by the global spread of capitalism. As larger, more competitive global businesses introduced newer, efficient methods of production, local economies like Ladakh's were deprived of their capacity to be self-reliant through traditional forms of labor, and in turn became dependent on outside sources for basic needs, such as food, water, and energy.

¹ Angus Maddison, *The World Economy: Historical Statistics*, pp. 256-62.

² BBC Four, "The Joy of Stats."

³ Helena Norberg-Hodge. *Ancient Futures: Lessons from Ladakh for a Globalizing World*.

The reorientation of the economy removed vital safety nets and forced people to leave their homes, move to the city, and find work in the new labor market. The subsequent effects of displacement weakened society's social and moral fabric, as dislocation from family, community and culture created a vacuum for materialism, individualism, and consumerism to subvert Buddhist values. Despite modernization's numerous benefits to people's standard of living, continued economic growth in advanced economies also failed to benefit higher level needs related to social well-being⁴ and happiness.⁵

Before modernization, the majority of mental disorders exhibited medical symptoms that impaired social functioning; but after the mid-nineteenth century, when societies began enjoying widespread abundance, the majority of psychoanalytic patients did not exhibit medical symptoms and instead suffered from a spiritual crisis, a sort of "inner deadness." Erich Fromm described man's modern affliction in terms of: "the alienation from oneself, from one's fellow man, and from nature; the awareness that life runs out of one's hand like sand, and that one will die without having lived; that one lives in the midst of plenty and yet is joyless."⁶

The devastating consequence of this spiritual crisis is an existential crisis that severely threatens the sustained vitality of sentient life and Buddhist traditions in the future. The inner turmoil caused by man's underlying greed, delusion, and hatred become

⁴ Kate Picket and Richard Wilkinson. *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*.

⁵See Figure 1 and Figure 2

⁶ Erich Fromm et al., *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, pp. 85-86.

manifestly projected in the outer turmoil of ecological crises.⁷ In other words: “The ruination of the natural world is directly related to the psychological and spiritual health of the human race since our practices follow our perceptions.”⁸ Our alienation from the environment has had unprecedented impact on the evolution of the human-environment relationship.⁹ In 2008, the Geological Society of London declared the end of the 12,000-year Holocene epoch and inaugurated the beginning of the Anthropocene, in order to distinguish a new geologic era when human activity became the predominant driver of transformation on Earth. The central role of humanity in shaping the planet now requires us to be an active steward of the ecology.¹⁰

Yet, we’ve neither accepted the costs of modern economic development nor the responsibility to transform them. In the process of modernization, human’s ecological footprint transgressed three of nine planetary thresholds demarcating a safe operating space required to support life.¹¹ Our energy consumption has increased 3% annually, such that we now consume 10,000 times more energy than 300 years ago.¹² Environmental incursions have caused a sixth extinction event, in which species are dying 1,000 times faster than the natural rate¹³ and pollution has caused man-made global warming.¹⁴ Yet, despite a broad consensus among 97-98% of scientific researchers who believe human

⁷ Shuichi Yamamoto, “Mahāyāna Buddhism and Environmental Ethics: From the Perspective of the Consciousness-Only Doctrine.”

⁸ Jay C. Rochelle, “Letting Go: Buddhism and Christian Models,” p. 45.

⁹ See Figure 3

¹⁰ Paul J. Crutzen and Christian Schwägerl. “Living in the Anthropocene: Toward a New Global Ethos.”

¹¹ Johan Rockström et al., “A Safe Operating Space for Humanity.”

¹² Mark Buchanan, “Could Economic Growth Kill Us?”

¹³ *Home*. DVD.

¹⁴ S. Solomon et al., *Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis*.

activity has caused climate change,¹⁵ powerful misinformation campaigns funded by fossil-fuel interests manipulate public opinion, intimidate lawmakers, and prevent civic engagement in order to impede any progress toward a solution.¹⁶

Such problems introduced in the process of modernization constitute a “progress trap,”¹⁷ because they prevent further progress and could potentially cause collapse so long as we lack the political will to resolve them. In 1972, Donella Meadows published the most important environmental title to date, entitled *The Limits to Growth*,¹⁸ in which she forecast massive human die-offs following environmental and economic collapse in the mid-twenty-first century, assuming that economic growth, resource use, and pollution continued at the same rate of increase as 1970. Since democratic institutions are beholden to corporate interests averse to short-term losses, consensual incremental reforms are unlikely to be effective. Instead, it’s necessary to coordinate and execute a systemic solution at a global level, inspired by both spiritual and social transformations.

1.2 Theoretical and Practical Solutions

The systemic, global solution to modernization’s aforementioned costs will be the natural result of post-modernization, defined as “a process of overcoming the negative effects of modernization while preserving its positive achievements.”¹⁹ In general, the intellectual foundation of post-modernism relies upon a diversity of input. It rejects the notion of an

¹⁵ William R.L. Anderegg et al., “Expert Credibility in Climate Change.”

¹⁶ Frontline, “Climate of Doubt.”

¹⁷ Ronald Wright, *A Short History of Progress*.

¹⁸ Donella H. Meadows, *The Limits to Growth*.

¹⁹ David Griffin. Preface to *Reenchantment of Science*, p. 16.

objective truth, it affirms a plurality of views arising from particular socio-cultural-economic-historical orientations, and it deconstructs outdated beliefs inconsistent with present-day knowledge.

The goal of its positive extension, called constructive post-modernism, is to incorporate this diverse knowledge into a viable framework for development. In the book *Encountering Development*, Arturo Escobar expands this position, explaining that local communities must rely on their unique traditions and cultural identities to address the problems of Western development, while constructing an alternative that eliminates existing political and economic distortions.²⁰

The engagement of Buddhism and science may fruitfully contribute to the project of constructive post-modernism by interfacing the development of inner and outer resources so that internal spiritual growth and external material growth support each other. As Zhihe Wang argues, such engagement could also be part of a much larger intellectual and cultural revolution called the “Second Enlightenment,” which integrates diverse traditions in the formation of a new paradigm redressing the flaws of the first Enlightenment.²¹ Francisco Varela echoes this sentiment by contending that “the rediscovery of Asian philosophy, particularly of the Buddhist tradition, is a second renaissance in the cultural history of the West.”²²

²⁰ Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*.

²¹ Zhihe Wang, “Postmodernization and the Second Enlightenment.”

²² Francisco J. Varela. *Ethical Know-How: Action, Wisdom, and Cognition*, p. 54.

Concerning theoretical solutions, Buddhism's engagement to science contributes an alternative to today's conceptual, scientific models which inform the failure of social systems and propagate the destruction of life on this planet. Although Buddhism has traditionally expressed passivity toward the development of science, Buddhists should recognize the importance of countering the Greco-Roman and Christian contributions to modern science's mechanistic worldview and help create a more intelligible, inclusive understanding of the natural world and its human inhabitants.²³ Since the intellectual stance of constructive postmodernism rejects Cartesian dualism and substantialism, while conceding the validity of truth claims beyond science,²⁴ it serves as a supportive framework for Buddhism's metaphysic of dependent origination (Skt. *pratītyasamutpāda*) to challenge today's models based on scientific reductionism.

There are several ways Buddhism's alternative model specifically dispels the suffering caused by man's alienation from nature and removes its functional significance in precipitating ecological and existential crises. In a general sense, Buddhism's sacramental attitude toward the natural world corrects science's deluded view of nature as a source of dead, inert material intended for industrial manipulation; while the basic Mahāyāna Buddhist concepts of interbeing, Buddha nature, and Buddha lands expand our ecological awareness to include non-differentiated aspects of ourselves in sentient and insentient beings.²⁵ Based on the principles of emptiness, impermanence, and interdependence, Buddhist metaphysics dissolves false dualisms, eliminates the

²³ John B. Cobb Jr., "Buddhism and the Natural Sciences."

²⁴ World Huaren Federation, "Constructive Postmodernism."

²⁵ YouTube, "Dr. Brook Ziporyn's Lecture- Buddhism and Ecology."

separation caused by anthropocentrism and enemyism, and conceives of a uniquely integrated human-environment relationship based on a-centrism.²⁶ Buddhism's understanding of dependent origination also makes visible the adverse effects of modernization, while its understanding of 'no-self' (Skt. *anātman*) prevents the creation of self-referential frames that project onto nature values and preferences derived from underlying greed, hatred, and delusion.²⁷ If scientific and technological development were not divorced from nature or directed toward the fulfillment of selfish desires, then man's inner afflictions would not manifest as ecological crises and we would instead fully and compassionately engage with nature.²⁸

Concerning practical solutions to the ecological crisis, society has heretofore adopted a wait-and-see approach that invests faith in technical engineering solutions offering only intermediate protections for the wealthy. According to Daniel O'Leary, the progress trap responsible for our crises is caused by a pattern of cerebral development, specialization and lateralization of brain function that favors an exclusive commitment to technocratic rationalism, which stifles creative problem-solving and excludes solutions to the problems it creates.²⁹ In *The Master and his Emissary*, neurological psychologist Iain McGilchrist affirms that humans have historically privileged the verbal thinking, computational, and technological skills of the left-hemisphere over the empathic, social, and holistic processes of the right-hemisphere. He later concludes that the left-

²⁶ Staphanie Kaza, "A Buddhist Response to Paul Ingram."

²⁷ Jason Tetsuzen Wirth. "Shikantaza During The Sixth Great Extinction."

²⁸ Shuichi Yamamoto, "Mahāyāna Buddhism and Environmental Ethics: From the Perspective of the Consciousness-Only Doctrine."

²⁹ Daniel Brian O'Leary, *Escaping the Progress Trap*.

hemisphere's dominion over the right-hemisphere has favored manipulative, competitive and control behaviors that have established an unsustainable growth economy to serve our rational, egotistical selves.³⁰

Though the origin of modern crises begin in the mind, we have tended to focus on what's known rather than our way of knowing, so much so that we risk becoming the best informed society that has ever died of ignorance (Skt. *moha*). In proposing a practical solution, Buddhism's engagement to science strengthens the parallel development of mind and matter. By cultivating Buddhist techniques to refine one's meditative concentration (Skt. *samādhi*), a process of neurological integration may re-establish harmony between the left- and right-hemispheres. There is real-time evidence in neuro-feedback studies that mental training increases brain connectivity and enhances awareness even during resting states.³¹ Such sustained transformation of one's conscious awareness should allow one to better conceive and communicate solutions based on a more accurate apprehension of the problems. As Francisco Varela eloquently stated:

“If everybody would agree that their current reality is A reality, and that what we essentially share is our capacity for constructing a reality, then perhaps we could all agree on a meta-agreement for computing a reality that would mean survival and dignity for everyone on the planet, rather than each group being sold on a particular way of doing things.”³²

³⁰ Ian McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*.

³¹ Tomas Ros et al., “Mind Over Chatter: Plastic Up-Regulation of the fMRI Salience Network Directly After EEG Neurofeedback.”

³² Francisco J. Varela, *The CoEvolution Quarterly* 8.12, p. 31.

1.3 Happiness as a Universal Goal of Development

Aware that the sustainability movement's inefficacy is rooted in the ideological supremacy of growth and consumption, transformation is increasingly focused on redirecting human pursuits from the promotion of economic development to the promotion of holistic well-being. Environmental safeguarding and human progress are now viewed as a common project, depending on a fundamental cultural transition that encourages human flourishing to supplant consumerism as the universal ideology of modern society.³³ The shift will reshape cultural values to prioritize “the good life” over “the goods life,” as deep ecologist Arne Naess argues, “Rather than aspiring to a ‘big’ life defined by material abundance, we should seek to live a ‘great’ life that promotes symbiotic relationships with all life forms.”³⁴

Solutions arising from the engagement between Buddhism and science are part of this global agenda to advance happiness and well-being. In Bhutan, the engagement of Buddhism and science created a development framework called Gross National Happiness, which then inspired the United Nations to adopt happiness as a universal goal for human development in 2011.³⁵ United Nation's Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon explained that the intention of establishing happiness as the central goal of development was to replace gross domestic product as our main measure of progress³⁶ and instead establish a people-centered approach to the three pillars of sustainable development,

³³ Linda Starke ed., *State of the World 2004: Special Focus: The Consumer Society*.

³⁴ Jae-Young Seo, “The Ecological Tradition of Korean Seon Monastery,” p. 4.

³⁵ Barbara Plett, “Bhutan Spreads Happiness to UN.”

³⁶ UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Remarks to the High-level Delegation of Mayors and Regional Authorities.

which include social, economic, and environmental well-being.³⁷ In the words of Bhutan's Prime Minister Jigmi Thinley:

“The time has come for global action to build a new world economic system that is no longer based on the illusion that limitless growth is possible on our precious and finite planet or that endless material gain promotes well-being. Instead, it will be a system that promotes harmony and respect for nature and for each other; that respects our ancient wisdom traditions and protects our most vulnerable people as our own family, and that gives us time to live and enjoy our lives and to appreciate rather than destroy our world. It will be an economic system, in short, that is fully sustainable and that is rooted in true, abiding well-being and happiness.”³⁸

Implementing this new directive, sixty eight countries have endorsed the UN declaration, while a worldwide network of local organizations³⁹ advances the global transition from gross domestic product to gross global happiness. Proceeding the April 2nd High Level Meeting on Wellbeing and Happiness, the UN also assembled an international working group tasked to:



“...elaborate dimensions of the new development model and recommend practical and detailed frameworks, institutional structures, operating systems, and regulatory mechanisms for a new global development paradigm that will... be based on the following four fundamental tenets: (1) Wellbeing and happiness as the fundamental goal and purpose of the new system; (2) Ecological sustainability; (3) Fair distribution; [and] (4) Efficient use of resources.”⁴⁰

This UN working group will prepare the groundwork for a major international summit in the summer of 2014, which will re-envision economic thought and reorganize the key economic and financial institutions arranging the global economy. The summit's final objective is to produce an agreement outlining a sustainable model for economic

³⁷ United Nations, “Secretary-General, in Message to Meeting on ‘Happiness and Well-being’ Calls for ‘Rio+20’ Outcome that Measures More than Gross National Income.”

³⁸ “Opening Address” by Prime Minister Jigmi Thinley of Bhutan, High Level Meeting on Wellbeing and Happiness: Defining a New Economic Paradigm.

³⁹ The Global Transition to a New Economy, <http://gtne.org/>.

⁴⁰ “Wellbeing and Happiness: A New Development Paradigm: Draft of the Proposal to Convene a Two-Year International Expert Working Group to Elaborate the Details of the New Paradigm: 2012-2014.”

development that is not based on the infinite growth model, established by the Bretton Woods Agreement of 1944.⁴¹

During the UN's High Level Meeting on Wellbeing and Happiness, a highly visible contingent of Buddhist leaders joined leaders from other spiritual traditions to issue this statement communicating their solidarity with the movement:

“As leaders representing various spiritual traditions, we believe that in the new economic paradigm, the role of spiritual traditions is to preserve and transmit to future generations the wisdom and love inherent in their own religious heritages, and the knowledge that the world is one community, interconnected and interdependent. The new economic paradigm is based upon compassion, altruism, balance, and peace, and dedicated to the well-being, happiness, dignity, and sacredness of all forms of life. Because external economic realities mirror internal psychological and spiritual realities, participants in the new paradigm pledge themselves to ethical conduct, reflecting and holding themselves to the highest level of integrity and virtue, increasing their sharing and dedication to others, and resilience in the face of challenges.”⁴²

Economic, social, and ecological crises do not merely challenge the legitimacy and vitality of Buddhism in the modern world. They also provide an opportunity for Buddhism to engage modernism, for the sake of better addressing our individual and collective suffering (Skt. *duḥkha*).⁴³ In fact, Buddhism is uniquely capable of benefiting the UN's strategic initiative as a world religion based in principle on the Four Noble Truths, which delineate the universal causes of suffering and the universal pathways to happiness. Its extensive history offers rich cultural resources for commonly defining and pursuing well-being. The emerging contributions of Buddhist modernism may offer essential innovations around values and lifestyles, which can in turn communally forge the mindsets and behaviors needed to cope with radical change. As people balance

⁴¹ Eric Zencey, “Toward a New Bretton Woods and a Sustainable Civilization.”

⁴² “Spiritual Leaders Statement for Suggested Inclusion in Policy Recommendations.”

⁴³ David Loy, “How Buddhist Is Modern Buddhism?”

external, material growth with internal, spiritual growth, they will also discover less is more by more mindfully engaging relationships that improve the quality of their lives at less cost to the environment and others.

1.4 Methodology

With broad concern for the issues just discussed, this thesis engages Buddhism to the science of happiness in order to advance a mutual respect and understanding for both disciplines, outlining those instances where both inform each other without overstepping boundaries where normative biases or insufficient knowledge otherwise create conflict. The relationships that ground Buddhism to the science of happiness will also be practically applied to social, economic, political, and educational platforms in order to advance an understanding of development in these important contexts.

This study first provides a creative synthesis of relevant literature from both Buddhist studies and happiness studies, in order to form a theoretical foundation upon which to bridge the two. It will rely on an integrative literature review format⁴⁴ to sustain a dialogue between five major approaches to the study of happiness. The five approaches include a normative approach, a psychological approach, a neurological approach, an economic approach, and a sociological approach. These five approaches present complementary and valuable insights, which can neither stand-alone nor stand-apart from a complete understanding of happiness, because each uses a distinct methodology engendering critical assumptions that limit its purview.

⁴⁴ Richard J. Torraco, "Writing Integrative Literature Reviews: Guidelines and Examples."

The normative approach presumes happiness is maximized by individuals' obedience to ethical prescriptions; the psychological approach presupposes that happiness is maximized by improving individuals' self-reported experience; the neurological approach presupposes that happiness is maximized by increasing neurological activity in areas associated with positive affect (i.e. the left prefrontal cortex); the economic approach presumes happiness is maximized by individuals rationally choosing to satisfy desires within resource constraints; and the sociological approach presumes happiness is maximized by improving individuals' external conditions.

By centering an integration of all five approaches on the normative principles of Buddhist ethics, I'll then critically discuss the merits of Buddhism's happiness hypothesis (a.k.a. "the *sukha* hypothesis"), by judging how successfully this integrative framework describes the results of an empirical study of happiness in a Chinese Buddhist community. Overall, this research is valuable, because it clarifies the scope and boundaries of various disciplines engaged in research on Buddhism and happiness, while applying this more comprehensive understanding to the first known empirical study on happiness in a Buddhist population.

1.5 Objectives

While the field of positive psychology encapsulates the science of happiness, the term happiness simply designates the wide range of goals within that field, without playing

any specific role in its theories.⁴⁵ Rather, the meaning of happiness changes in various contexts because it is a mongrel concept. It can be discussed as a value term, as defined by hedonism, desire theories, and objective list theories, or it can be discussed as a psychological term, as defined by hedonic theories, life satisfaction theories, emotional state theories, and hybrid theories.⁴⁶

Since happiness is a mongrel concept, happiness research likewise reflects disparate constructs. However, different systems of measurement cannot meaningfully relate data to the same theoretical construct. For example, cross-comparison of data concerning happiness and virtue using self-reports versus behavioral tasks is often meaningless, because neither happiness nor virtue is the same construct across both of these measurements. As Jerome Kagan pointedly argues, “the theoretical meaning of a descriptive term for any quality is derived from its source of evidence,” and since theoretical meanings change as their referents change, theoretical constructs are therefore tied to their assessment contexts.⁴⁷

Considering the real danger of misattributing facts gathered by distinct measurement systems to a singular concept representing Buddhism’s view of happiness, the arguments of this thesis will follow a threefold structure. First, happiness will be defined in correspondence to a Buddhist concept, called *sukha*. Second, the Buddhist concept of *sukha* will be supported by a scientific construct similarly defined. Third, the

⁴⁵ M.E.P. Seligman, M.E.P., *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*, p.304.

⁴⁶ Dan Haybron, “Happiness.”

⁴⁷ Jerome Kagan, “The Meanings of Personality Predicates.”

scientific construct of *sukha* will be experimentally demonstrated. These three steps establish what could be called (1) happiness as *sukha*, (2) the *sukha* hypothesis, and (3) the proof of *sukha*.

In the process of establishing these three objects, this thesis will outline analysis and conclusions aimed at fulfilling the following seven objectives:

1. To empirically test Buddhism's happiness hypothesis by judging how successfully Buddhism's (1) textual prescriptions, (2) institutional frameworks, and (3) modern practices measurably reduce suffering and enhance well-being for practitioners.
2. To compare measurable differences in the subjective well-being of non-practitioners, novice practitioners, and advanced practitioners to better understand the degree to which the progressive embodiment of Buddhist ethics, meditation, and wisdom reduces suffering and enhances well-being.
3. To define the unique impacts of specific Buddhist practices by discerning how a particular outcome in well-being relates to functional changes in the practitioner's psychosocial and psychophysiological responses after engaging in said practice.
4. To compare the quality of subjective well-being in various practitioners (i.e. Buddhist and non-Buddhist, lay and monastic, novice and advanced) to discover how the importance of certain well-being domains may transform relative to a change in the practitioners values and perceptions.
5. To discover if the progressive embodiment of Buddhist values diminishes the importance of external development relative to a psychological approach to well-being, which favors mentally conditioning one's responses to external phenomena.
6. To examine how the conditions, policies, ethical code, discipline, and organizational structure present in various Buddhist institutions (i.e. monasteries, temples, universities, etc...) produce measurable differences in the subjective well-being of monastic and lay populations.
7. To examine to what degree the desire for sense pleasure (as distinct from non-sensual pleasure), is derived from attachments to one's self and other objects, to what degree it forms the root cause of dissatisfaction, and to what extent relinquishing these attachments is the key to happiness.

1.6 Review

In just a year and a half period from 2009-10, 27,000 books and articles were written on the subject of happiness.⁴⁸ Though popular literature abounds with talk of happiness, the nascent fields of Buddhist ethics and happiness studies are still in their infancy and lack fully developed concepts of well-being. Yet, in the last several decades, a strong wave of interest in both fields is accelerating the pace of their development.

If we regard the history of world religions and philosophies, we see the relationship between happiness and ethics have been discussed at length.⁴⁹ The Buddhist tradition figures unusually within this history, because it does not contain ethical treatises or an internal discipline of moral philosophy that developed any outstanding discourse on happiness and ethics. Buddhism may have precluded the development of such discourse, because (1) Indian philosophy provided no precedent, (2) kingship precluded democratic freedoms instrumental to the development of ethical discourse, and (3) the separation of monastic and lay communities historically isolated the ideals of Buddhism from human affairs.⁵⁰

Although Buddhism lacked any ethical framework for understanding happiness, the influences of modernization and globalization and the subsequent advent of engaged Buddhism demanded a modern Buddhist ethic to address the unique emergence of important contemporary, social issues. The Western propagation of Buddhism expanded

⁴⁸ John de Graaf, "The Progressive Politics of Happiness."

⁴⁹ Dan Haybron, "Happiness."

⁵⁰ Damien Keown, "Keynote One."

Buddhist studies beyond the standard projects of textual studies to include interdisciplinary discourses concerned with social welfare and social transformation. In this new environment, the emergence of Buddhist modernism also attempted to address the causes of suffering in both structural and cultural violence at the level of the individual, community, and society.

In 1992, a modern renaissance in Buddhist ethics was inaugurated by its first systematic treatment in Damien Keown's *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*. Before its publication, Keown lamented "the total number of books on Buddhist ethics... can be counted on the fingers of one hand."⁵¹ However, as a result of its widespread impact, Charles Prebish noted that there was a rapid growth in scholarly research on Buddhist ethics, because the book "offered researchers a creative paradigm shift, useful for understanding the whole of the Buddhist ethical tradition."⁵² This growth was supplemented by the 1994 establishment of the online *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*,⁵³ which both Keown and Prebish founded as a platform for further developments.

Since Buddhism itself did not contain a unified theory of ethics, the early opinions of Buddhist ethics scholars typically adopted utilitarianism and hedonism as explanatory systems with which to view happiness as the central goal of ethical conduct. This perception has persisted in recent scholarship, in the case of Padmasiri de Silva for instance, who believes, "Buddhism may be described as a consequentialist ethic embodying the ideal of ultimate happiness for the individual, as well as a social ethic

⁵¹ Damien Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, p. ix.

⁵² Charles S. Prebish, *Historical Dictionary of Buddhism*, p. 107-108.

⁵³ The Journal of Buddhist Ethics. <http://blogs.dickinson.edu/buddhistethics/>

with a utilitarian stance concerned with the material and spiritual well-being of mankind.”⁵⁴ Koewn on the other hand rejected such characterizations, arguing in favor of Buddhism’s compatibility with Aristotelian virtue ethics⁵⁵ and its concept of happiness, called *eudaimonia*. More recently, several scholars have resisted any holistic attempt to explain Buddhist ethics in terms of a singular moral theory using Western ethical categories such as consequentialism, particularism, virtue ethics, or deontology; because as Maria Heim argues, using Western systems to classify Buddhist ethics ignores Buddhism’s own unique methods of moral discourse and the divergences that exist between them.⁵⁶

The relationship between happiness and Buddhist ethics was extended to the economic domain by the field of Buddhist economics.⁵⁷ Although Buddhist economics was initially conceived by E.F. Schumacher in a widely read essay by the same name,⁵⁸ Schumacher’s use of the term was tied to his own economics of human scale and appropriate technology, based largely on the Catholic tradition.⁵⁹ Later, the field was more substantially developed by a number of Theravada Buddhists, aided by the publication of Ven. P.A. Payutto’s landmark essay⁶⁰ and the Thai government’s own

⁵⁴ Padmasiri De Silva, *Twin Peaks: Compassion and Insight: Emotions and the “Self” in Buddhist and Western Thought*, p. 62.

⁵⁵ Damien Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, p. 21.

⁵⁶ Maria Heim, “Toward a ‘Wider and Juster Initiative’: Recent Comparative Work in Buddhist Ethics,” p. 110.

⁵⁷ The most notable contributions in this area include: Richard Payne ed., *How Much is Enough? Buddhism, Consumerism, and the Human Environment*; Colin Ash, *Happiness and Economics: A Buddhist Perspective*, Robert Biswas-Diener, *The ‘What, Why, and How’ of Happiness Measurement in Buddhist Economics*.

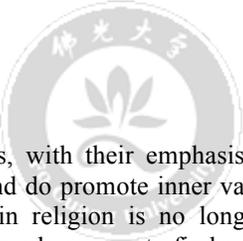
⁵⁸ E.F. Schumacher, “Buddhist Economics.”

⁵⁹ Charles Fager, “Small Is Beautiful, and So Is Rome: Surprising Faith of E.F. Schumacher.”

⁶⁰ Payutto, P.A.. *Buddhist Economics: A Middle Way for the Market Place*. Trans. Bruce Evans. Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1995.

advocacy of a “sufficiency economy.”⁶¹ More recently, developments in Buddhist economics have been globally coordinated through the Buddhist Economics Research Platform, founded by Laszlo Zsolnai, whose latest edited volume⁶² provides the best summary analysis of the field.

Regarding the most current direction of ethics within the Buddhist tradition, Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, has taken a very progressive stance supporting the universalization of ethics through the secularization of Buddhist practice. In his treatise *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World*, the Dalai Lama proposes an empirical, scientific approach to the development of Buddhist ethics that responds to the spread of modern secularism⁶³ and the urgent need to encourage moral development outside religious contexts:



“All the world’s major religions, with their emphasis on love, compassion, patience, tolerance, and forgiveness can and do promote inner values. But the reality of the world today is that grounding ethics in religion is no longer adequate. This is why I am increasingly convinced that the time has come to find a way of thinking about spirituality and ethics beyond religion altogether.”⁶⁴

The secularization of Buddhist ethics via its engagement with science has been a controversial development, which the Dalai Lama defends by highlighting the complementarity of Buddhist and scientific investigative approaches, their dual concern

⁶¹ Darren Noy, “Thailand’s Sufficiency Economy: Origins and Comparisons with Other Systems of Religious Economics.”

⁶² Laszlo Zsolnai, *Ethical Principles and Economic Transformation: A Buddhist Approach*.

⁶³ “Religion Among the Millennials.”

⁶⁴ Dalai Lama, *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World*.

for promoting flourishing and happiness, and the many benefits derived from their engagement.⁶⁵ As he received the Nobel Peace Prize, the Dalai Lama explained:

“With the ever-growing impact of science on our lives, religion and spirituality have a greater role to play by reminding us of our humanity. There is no contradiction between the two. Each gives us valuable insights into the other. Both science and the teachings of the Buddha tell us of the fundamental unity of all things. This understanding is crucial if we are to take positive and decisive action on the pressing global concern with the environment.”⁶⁶

In response to the Dalai Lama’s vision, multiple programs and research initiatives were created to strengthen the engagement between Buddhism and science. In the last several years, several monastic students have received science instruction through the Emory-Tibet Science Initiative, Science for Monks, and Science Meets Dharma programs. In the future, the number of monastic students taught science should increase to more than 20,000 in India and Nepal, since Tibetan monastic universities now require Geshe degree students to complete a comprehensive course of science education covering cosmology, life sciences, and neurocognitive science. This decision to teach science to all monastic scholars in the Gelug tradition was the most significant change to their core curriculum in centuries.⁶⁷

At the forefront of the research agenda, the Mind and Life institute advances their mission of “building a scientific understanding of the mind to reduce suffering and promote well-being.”⁶⁸ Each year, the institute hosts a conference⁶⁹ dedicated to the

⁶⁵ Dalai Lama, *The Universe in a Single Atom: The Convergence of Science and Spirituality*.

⁶⁶ Nobelprize.org, “The 14th Dalai Lama - Acceptance Speech.”

⁶⁷ Emory University, “The Emory-Tibet Science Initiative.”

⁶⁸ The Mind and Life Institute. <http://www.mindandlife.org/>

⁶⁹ Conferences which informed this study include: Mind and Life VIII: Destructive Emotions, Mind and Life XX: Altruism and Compassion in Economic Systems, and Mind and Life XXIII: Ecology, Ethics and Interdependence.

convergence of Buddhism and science, typically focused on contemplative science, contemplative education, and secular ethics. In particular, the field of contemplative science has experienced a startling growth in the funding and publication of research,⁷⁰ where the subjects of meditation and mindfulness are most popularly covered.⁷¹ Perhaps the most fruitful and novel collaboration in this field is neurophenomenology. As explained by its pioneer, Francisco Varela, neurophenomenology joins Buddhist contemplative practices with modern science to investigate a more cohesive understanding of the mind based on both first-person and third-person accounts of experience:

“This consciousness ‘revolution’ has brought to center stage the simple fact that studying the brain and behavior requires an equally disciplined complement: the exploration of experience itself. It is here that Buddhism stands as an outstanding source of observations concerning human mind and experience, accumulated over centuries with great theoretical rigor, and, what is even more significant, with very precise exercises and practices for individual exploration. This treasure-trove of knowledge is an uncanny complement to science. Where the material refinement of science is unmatched in empirical studies, the experiential level is still immature and naive compared to the long-standing Buddhist tradition of studying the human mind.”⁷²

While the goal of these various initiatives is to promote human happiness and flourishing, there is also an important opportunity for Buddhist ethics and the science of happiness to inform the engagement between Buddhism and science. For example, improvements in well-being arising from technical developments in sciences such as biology, neuroscience, or psychology can be guided and evaluated by a parallel examination of appropriate

⁷⁰ Contemplative Mind in Life: A Global Collection of Mindfulness and Meditation Research Resources. “Some Statistics RE: explosion of research in Contemplative Sciences.”

⁷¹ See Figure 4

⁷² Varela, Francisco J.. "Buddhism and Modern Science: The Importance of the Encounter with Buddhism for Modern Science." <http://www.mindandlife.org/about/hhdl-mli/buddhism-and-modern-science/>.

models for human development. In this respect, Buddhism serves an important role in interpreting and relating scientific findings to human experience and future endeavor.

Although there is sufficient scholarship to study the subject of happiness from a Buddhist or scientific perspective, cross-pollination between these two fields is exceedingly rare. Regarding extant research, there are only five book-length discussions devoted entirely to the intersection of Buddhism and the science of happiness. The first is aptly entitled *Buddhism and the Science of Happiness*⁷³ and it would seem on the surface to offer the most direct commentary on the subject; however it is a personal exploration whose contents do not bear particular relevance to academic discussion. The second is a dissertation by Michael Murphy which presents a comparative study of happiness and well-being from the perspectives of positive psychology and Buddhist psychology.⁷⁴ Its main argument explains how differences surrounding the treatment of happiness in these two disciplines originate from disparate views of ‘self,’ which problematically emerge in fundamentally opposite approaches to pursuing happiness. Whereas positive psychology posits the existence of a ‘self’ and therefore pursues happiness directly through “the study of positive emotions, positive character traits, and enabling institutions,”⁷⁵ Buddhism negates the existence of a ‘self’ and pursues happiness indirectly by eliminating the causes of suffering which obstruct happiness.

⁷³ William Woollard, *Buddhism and the Science of Happiness*.

⁷⁴ Michael D. Murphy, “The Happiness Agenda: A Comparison of Perspectives from Positive Psychology and American Buddhist Psychology on the Pursuit of Well-being.”

⁷⁵ M.E.P. Seligman et al., “Positive Psychology Progress: Empirical Validation of Interventions,” p. 410.

While this study agrees with Murphy's basic premise that the Buddhist pursuit of happiness corrects positive psychology's tendency toward promoting self-improvement projects that in fact cause suffering, there are also many points of divergence in which this study will advance different avenues of inquiry on the topic of well-being. In general, Murphy's dissertation limits itself to an examination of secondary literature in American Buddhist psychology and does not explore cross-cultural comparisons.⁷⁶ In contrast, this thesis will more broadly review developments within Buddhism and the science of happiness; it will reconcile differences arising from competing views of 'self' by providing more recent evidence from cognitive neuroscience that align Buddhist views of 'non-self' with an authentically Buddhist concept of happiness; and it will provide empirical evidence of Buddhism's effects on well-being in other cultures.

The third and fourth works by Matthieu Ricard⁷⁷ and Jonathan Haidt⁷⁸ are in many ways complementary, because they each present satisfying overviews of the science of happiness from a clear scientific and Buddhist worldview. Ricard's mix of personal anecdotes, dharma teachings, and scientific explanations creates a constellation locating Buddhist orthodoxy's position within the broad spectrum of happiness research, whereas Haidt's mix of scientific evidence and basic Buddhist philosophy creates meaning in the balance between the two. Although they present internally consistent narratives, each engenders biases which assume a dominant perspective and avoid

⁷⁶ Michael D. Murphy, "The Happiness Agenda: A Comparison of Perspectives from Positive Psychology and American Buddhist Psychology on the Pursuit of Well-being," p. 7.

⁷⁷ Matthieu Ricard, *Happiness: A Guide to Developing Life's Most Important Skill*.

⁷⁸ Jonathan Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom*.

incoherencies in their arguments by either inadequately or inaccurately representing the alternative position.

For example, Haidt's neutral stance assumes that modern psychology and Buddhism offer complementary insights, which are by themselves incomplete because they tend to focus exclusively on the benefits of external and internal goods respectively. When criticizing Buddhism, Haidt claims that conditions which are scientifically conducive to happiness are not valued,⁷⁹ in the case of marriage for instance, because Buddhist views on nonattachment preclude their importance.⁸⁰ Yet, Haidt suffers from a rudimentary and often mistaken understanding of Buddhism, which in this case, wrongly interprets its views on nonattachment and ignores instances where Buddhism would positively view marriage, assuming the self-protective clinging of true attachment was replaced by the unconditional, compassionate love of one's spouse. If Haidt's opinion had been better informed by Ricard's deeper understanding on this issue,⁸¹ then a better conclusion could have been drawn between Buddhism's views on marriage and scientific research which in fact corroborates the benefits of compassionate love.⁸²

On the other hand, Ricard's arguments at times suffer from an abiding assumption in the compatibility between certain Buddhist and scientific insights. For instance, Ricard's views on happiness are appropriately explained in Buddhist terms, according to the transformation of the poisons through the cultivation of their antidotes; however, it is

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 128-134.

⁸¹ Matthieu Ricard, *Happiness: A Guide to Developing Life's Most Important Skill*, pp. 143-145.

⁸² L. Underwood, "Compassionate Love."

not clear how Buddhism's discussion of negative and positive mental states based on these concepts substantially relates to positive psychology's very different system of classifying positive and negative emotions. Unfortunately, Ricard uses evidence from positive psychology to support statements about Buddhism without carefully delimiting boundaries or clarifying relationships, such that complex Buddhist taxonomies classifying 84,000 negative emotions are reduced to the major poisons and their supposed equivalence to scientific findings on desire, hatred, and envy for instance.⁸³

The fifth and by far most accomplished work is Owen Flanagan's comparative academic study.⁸⁴ Since it neither suffers from Haidt's inadequate understanding of Buddhism nor Ricard's overestimation of the confluence between Buddhism and science, Flanagan's work presents the only accurate appraisal of scientific evidence related to Buddhism's claims on happiness. Its more critical approach toward the capacity of Buddhism and science to inform one another begins with the sober conclusion that there is no current scientific understanding of happiness from an authentically Buddhist perspective:

“Regarding the current state of research, there are in fact no scientific studies yet on Buddhism as a lived philosophy and spiritual tradition, in any of its forms, and happiness. None, zero!”⁸⁵

Due to this lacuna in scientific research, Flanagan understandably limits his treatment of Buddhism to an exceedingly selective interpretation, which is compatible with high epistemic standards and current scientific knowledge, in an effort to reduce conflict and

⁸³ See Chapters 11, 12, and 13 of Matthieu Ricard, *Happiness: A Guide to Developing Life's Most Important Skill*.

⁸⁴ Owen Flanagan, *The Bodhisattva's Brain: Buddhism Naturalized*.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

prevent overstepping the terms of its agreement with science. However, Flanagan’s subsequent analysis does not ultimately reflect a Buddhist concept of happiness either, because his secular, naturalistic account of it sacrifices the integrity of core Buddhist beliefs (i.e. nirvana, karma, etc...) ⁸⁶ bearing essential relevance to the discussion.

In an attempt to address these issues, the unique task of this thesis is to build the first constructive framework for explaining Buddhism’s orthodox views on happiness within the extant body of scientific literature. Since there are currently no direct studies on Buddhism and happiness, the constructive framework must be speculative in nature, relying on the results of isolated studies on Buddhist practice or values to convincingly build a body of evidence suggesting their possible relationship to Buddhism and happiness. The tentative hypothesis produced by this speculative body of evidence will be experimentally tested to establish its validity regarding the real relationship of happiness and Buddhism as a lived philosophy and spiritual tradition. The result will be the first step in scientifically defining a Buddhist construct of happiness- a theoretical “science of *sukha*.”

1.7 Chapter Structure

This thesis will theoretically delineate the relationship between scientific studies, Buddhist doctrine, and Buddhist practice in chapters 2-4. In this section, well-being will be defined in theory and in practice by examining its relationship to the three primary sub-disciplines of happiness economics, namely psychology, economics, and sociology.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

The threefold division of this study according to these particular sub-disciplines not only clarifies the contributions of separate disciplinary discourses; it also builds an understanding of well-being based on the hierarchy of its individual, relational, and societal components. A cross-comparative analysis of scientific research and Buddhist ethics will draw relevant connections between these sub-disciplines and well-being, with the intent to build a scientific theory on the Buddhist concept of happiness based on the following three arguments:

Chapter 2: A Buddhist Psychology of Happiness

Argument: The Buddhist concept of happiness is a branch of *eudaimonia*, specifically developed via Buddhism's threefold practice of virtue, meditation, and wisdom.

Chapter 3: A Buddhist Economics of Happiness

Argument: The maximally happy person is the maximally virtuous person engaged in purely altruistic relationships with others.

Chapter 4: A Buddhist Sociology of Happiness

Argument: Gross National Happiness is a viable framework translating Buddhist values into a model for human development.

In chapter 4, a sociological study of Buddhism's effects on happiness will empirically test the validity of each argument. To accomplish this, Fo Guang University will be the site of a campus-wide survey, where known contributors to happiness, such as one's attitude toward materialism, spirituality, and volunteerism, as well as one's reported outlook, mood, and satisfaction will be compared across the College of Buddhist Studies and the general student body to discern the impact of Buddhist values and cultivation on happiness.

Chapter 2 A Buddhist Psychology of Happiness

2.1 Happiness, Suffering, and Nirvana

Since the beginning of civilization, happiness has been discussed by philosophy, religion, and now modern psychology as a universally desired object. The father of American psychology, William James stated, “How to gain, how to keep, how to recover happiness is in fact for most people at all times the secret motive of all they do, and of all they are willing to endure.”¹ The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle said happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.² Following the publication of his extremely popular classic, *The Art of Happiness*,³ the Dalai Lama now regularly reminds Buddhists that “the very purpose of life is to be happy.”⁴

Yet it was only very recently that happiness could conceivably replace suffering as Buddhism’s main object of concern. The historical revisionism that allowed Buddhist modernism to reframe its purpose from the cessation of suffering to the promotion of happiness was a byproduct of a dramatic cultural shift in our attitude toward happiness. Before the Renaissance, happiness was associated with a happenstance condition of good luck or fortune, marked by the absence of misery and poverty; but after societies

¹ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 74.

² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I 1095a.

³ Dalai Lama, *The Art of Happiness, 10th Anniversary Edition: A Handbook for Living*.

⁴ Speech of His Holiness the Dalai Lama at the Forum 2000 Conference, Prague, Czech Republic, September 1997, quoted in Vic Mansfield and Dalai Lama, *Tibetan Buddhism and Modern Physics: Toward a Union of Love and Knowledge*, p. 16.

modernized, the possibility of happiness grew in tandem with the rise of middle class incomes and relatively comfortable lifestyles. Modernization's spread of wealth and abundance created a new zeitgeist, characterized by a universal fervor to pursue happiness. In conjunction with the spread of secular humanism, people began believing they were deserving of happiness in this life, rather than in some promised afterlife.

The steady inflation of people's expectations and hopes for happiness in some cases reframed the goal of religion as a means to earthly happiness.⁵ In addition, the spread of secularism, humanism, and materialism privileged immanent human concerns and rejected the possibility of transcendent concerns which have always defined Buddhism. Thus, the imperative for happiness has sometimes redefined Buddhism as a "science of happiness." Perhaps the most outlandish example of this new trend is a Japanese religious organization with over 12 million followers in 85 countries, whose founder claims to be the living incarnation of Shakyamuni Buddha, teaching a combination of Western science and Eastern wisdom, called Happy Science.⁶

In reality, however, Buddhism is explicitly concerned with transcending *samsāra* as a means to end suffering, and the experience of happiness, comfort, or enjoyment, which is the result of dharma practice, is not to be directly pursued. Instead, Buddhists believe happiness is indirectly pursued by understanding and overcoming suffering. Supporting the Buddhist approach, Oliver Burkeman argues that the modern injunction to be happy by focusing on positive thinking backfires, because happiness actually arises

⁵ Darrin M. McMahon, *Happiness: A History*.

⁶ Happy Science. <http://www.happy-science.org/>

from embracing the unsatisfactoriness of life.⁷ Of course, the primacy of understanding suffering in Buddhism does not encourage an exceedingly pessimistic outlook that prevents healthy optimism from highlighting life's positive aspects.⁸ Buddhism claims instead that the appropriateness of an emotional response is dependent on a proper discernment of reality. In psychological terms, optimism can be either realistic or unrealistic,⁹ and if positive thinking “keeps us from seeing reality with the necessary clarity,”¹⁰ it can reinforce positive delusions that create suffering; while, if optimism is imposed, it can additionally encourage negative self-reflection, denial, and dissatisfaction.¹¹

Rather than pursue happiness directly by promoting positivity, Buddhism's clarion call to understand suffering is conceived as the most expedient means, because it perpetually reminds us the human condition is problematic and requires our detailed attention. In a recent study, individuals who viewed suffering were more likely to pursue happiness by benefiting others, because the suffering allowed them to contemplate negative emotions that cultivated a greater sense of gratitude towards others.¹² Whereas contentment causes complacency, tragedy wakes us up. It is this act of awakening that Buddhism extolls above all other goals, and it is through the elimination of hatred, greed,

⁷ Oliver Burkeman, *The Antidote: Happiness for People Who Can't Stand Positive Thinking*.

⁸ For more information on healthy optimism, see: Elaine Fox, *Rainy Brain, Sunny Brain: How to Retrain Your Brain to Overcome Pessimism and Achieve a More Positive Outlook*.

⁹ Christopher Peterson, “The Future of Optimism.”

¹⁰ M.E.P. Seligman, *Learned Optimism*.

¹¹ Scott O. Lilienfeld, and Hal Arkowitz, “Can Positive Thinking Be Negative?”

¹² Silvia Knobloch-Westerwick, et al., “Tragedy Viewers Count Their Blessings: Feeling Low on Fiction Leads to Feeling High on Life.”

and delusion, as well as the ignorant view of self, that allows one to attain the state of unconditional happiness in nirvana.¹³

Within Buddhism's soteriological framework, suffering and happiness are dialectically opposed, so that the cessation of suffering occurs simultaneously with the perfection of happiness, and the pursuit of happiness is understood in terms of a gradual transformation of suffering. Rather than conclude happiness is not the purpose of a Buddhist way of life, it can be understood within the same soteriological framework opposed to suffering and culminating in nirvana. As Master Yin Shun said:

“In summary, the wishes of humankind are nothing more than the pursuit of these three kinds of happiness (i.e. happiness in the present life, happiness in future lives and the ultimate happiness).”¹⁴

Ignorance and confusion regarding the universal importance of happiness is primarily caused by mistaking its earthly, sensual, more conventional forms for the transcendent, non-sensual, more durable forms that Buddhism promotes. To understand the nature of happiness and suffering within a Buddhist framework, it is essential to first clearly define these concepts in relation to their Buddhist equivalents, *sukha* and *duḥkha*:

“[*Sukha* is] a state of flourishing that arises from mental balance and insight into the nature of reality. Rather than a fleeting emotion or mood aroused by sensory and conceptual stimuli, *sukha* is an enduring trait that arises from a mind in a state of equilibrium and entails a conceptually unstructured and unfiltered awareness of the true nature of reality.”¹⁵

“Similarly, the Buddhist concept of *duḥkha*, often translated as ‘suffering,’ is not simply an unpleasant feeling. Rather, it refers to a basic vulnerability to suffering and pain due to

¹³ Daw Mya Tin trans., *The Dhammapada: Verses and Stories*, verse 204.

¹⁴ Yin Shun. *Selected Translations of Miao Yun Part VI*, p. 101.

¹⁵ P. Ekman et al., “Buddhist and Psychological Perspectives on Emotions and Well-Being,” p. 60.

the misapprehension of the nature of reality and to the influence of afflictive mental states such as hatred, craving, pride, and envy.”¹⁶

According to Buddhism’s radical understanding, it is possible to be both happy and sad at the same time, because happiness as *sukha* is not conceived as a pleasant feeling, but as a way of being in tune with reality.¹⁷ Furthermore, even if we are happy, we will still inevitably encounter suffering, because neither is happiness fully perfected nor is suffering completely extinguished until enlightenment. Nevertheless, while we continue to experience suffering as *duḥkha*, as in the case of pervasive war and famine, we can also continually experience happiness as *sukha* by positively responding with an appropriate, justified response like sadness, as opposed to hatred or violence. Whether we experience happiness or misery therefore depends on whether the clarity and purity of our minds skillfully responds to suffering, or whether our ignorance and afflictions respond harmfully instead.¹⁸ According to the *Kālāma sūtra* (AN 3.65), truth is born in the realization of qualities (Skt. *dharma*) that are skillful (Skt. *kuśala*), blameless, praised by the wise, and when adopted and carried out, lead to welfare and happiness. In fact, truth itself can be discriminated by assessing its contribution to *sukha*, which arises by removing greed (Skt. *lobha*), hatred (Skt. *doṣa*), and delusion (Skt. *moha*) so that one instead outwardly radiates the four immeasurables (Skt. *brahmavihāras*) of loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity.¹⁹

Understandably, many people are confused by this unconventional interpretation of happiness and suffering as a way of being, rather than a way of feeling. In the

¹⁶ Matthieu Ricard, “The Dalai Lama: Happiness from Within,” p. 275.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

¹⁸ Matthieu Ricard, *Happiness: A Guide to Developing Life’s Most Important Skill*, pp. 46-48.

¹⁹ Bhikkhu Thanissaro trans. “Kalamasutta: To the Kalamas” (AN 3.65).

Happiness Hypothesis for example, Jonathan Haidt repeats the common Western critique of Buddhism's view, claiming that non-attachment denies the richness of both positive and negative emotions which paint, color, shape, text, and form the human condition.²⁰ The French are particularly well-known for their resistance to the happiness movement, because the creative process which endowed them with rich cultural and artistic legacies upholds the full spectrum of human emotion and suffering as objects of veneration.²¹ To a Buddhist, however, happiness is the result of a meaningful life, supported by mindfulness, and characterized by an openness, awareness, and acceptance of all its experiences, whether desirable or not. It is not a fleeting feeling of arousal, excitement, merriment, or good cheer.²²

Therefore, how we define happiness is of paramount importance. When critiquing Buddhism, it's important not to impose singular definitions of happiness as pleasure or pleasure as sensual, because this would discredit the qualitative differences between different states of happiness of which feeling pleasure is a single aspect divided between base sense pleasures and the non-sensual pleasures afforded by higher cultivations. To understand the relationships between various states of happiness, it may be useful to explicate an inclusive hierarchy that distinguishes between both higher and lower forms of happiness as well as the base and transcendent desires which support them. A large amount of Buddhist textual material expounds the higher and lower forms of happiness

²⁰ Jonathan Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom*, pp. 102-106.

²¹ Claudia Senik, "The French Unhappiness Puzzle: the Cultural Dimensions of Happiness."

²² Alan B. Wallace, *Genuine Happiness: Meditation as the Path to Fulfillment*.

induced by various dharma practices.²³ The lowest forms of happiness are experienced as sense pleasures; but contrary to the common Western critique, Buddhism does not deny sense pleasures, because they can be either a source of happiness or suffering depending upon whether or not they engender attachment and craving.²⁴ Above sense pleasures, Buddhism expounds ever-increasing, ever-subtler forms of non-sensual pleasures experienced in the four progressive *jhanas*.²⁵ Finally, in the fourth *jhana*, an even greater happiness that altogether transcends pleasure is experienced.

These types of transcendent happiness were first described scientifically by positive psychology's earliest proponent, Abraham Maslow. Maslow established his career by uniquely exploring the ways in which self-actualization is a universal human tendency underlying growth and development. In line with Buddhism, Maslow believed happiness was the result of true progress:

“Growth takes place when the next step forward is subjectively more delightful, more joyous, more intrinsically satisfying than the previous gratification which we have become familiar and even bored.”²⁶

At the top of Maslow's hierarchy, human excellence was perfected and the greatest happiness was felt as a peak experience, characterized by a “loss of self or transcendence of [self].”²⁷ The ineffable qualities, emotional rapture, and mystical union associated with peak experiences generally linked them to religious experiences, like those of the four

²³ The Āgamas, Nikāyas and Abhidharma provide particularly rich sources of material on non-sensual states of happiness arising from one's practice. English translations and modern articles of this material can be found here: http://www.bps.lk/onlinelibrary_wheels.html

²⁴ Matthieu Ricard, “The Dalai Lama: Happiness from Within,” p. 278.

²⁵ See the Pasadika Sutta (DN 29.23-24).

²⁶ A.H. Maslow, *Towards a Psychology of Being*, p. 53.

²⁷ A.H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, p. 138.

jhanas. Self-actualizing people who had previous peak experiences reported greater satisfaction in life.²⁸ However, Maslow noted that the happiness from a peak experience itself was always rare and fleeting. Rather, their most significant contribution was their capacity to inspire profound change in an individual.

Far more than a feeling, Buddhism's concept of happiness as *sukha* is the foundation for both inner and outer transformation, because it grounds an engaged way of being in the world that is more gratifying, authentic, and compassionate than the one we're ordinarily living. In order to prevent confusion, it is fundamentally important to parse the use and meaning of happiness in Buddhism as separate from other views. In the following section, positive psychology's further study of positive growth will be related to Buddhism's views on happiness in an effort to distinguish Buddhism's own "happiness hypothesis" as a distinct claim within the field.²⁹

2.2 Buddhism's Happiness Hypothesis

Though happiness is a universal desire, human beings continually suffer in pursuit of happiness, because their ignorance and delusion (*moha*) mistake the object of their pursuit. Until awakening dispels ignorance, the pursuit of happiness will only result in more unhappiness and sorrow, as Śāntideva laments:

“Although having the mind that wishes to shun suffering,
They rush headlong into suffering itself.

²⁸ A.H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, p. xxii.

²⁹ For extant theoretical research of Buddhism's views on happiness, see: Matthieu Ricard, "A Buddhist View on Happiness," Matthieu Ricard, "The Dalai Lama: Happiness from Within," and Alexander Berne, "The Sources of Happiness According to Buddhism."

Although wishing for happiness, yet out of naivety (Skt. *moha*),
They destroy their own happiness as if it were a foe.
In other words, although we wish for happiness, we are naive about its sources and so,
instead of creating more happiness for ourselves, we create only more unhappiness and
sorrow.”³⁰

Since people never fully experience happiness and well-being until they understand its true sources, Buddhism’s primary task is to correct people’s mistaken views by first deconstructing counterfeit claims to happiness, then clearly defining its genuine counterpart and the path to its perfection. In its simplest form, the goal of the Buddhist path is to transform suffering in pursuit of happiness into happiness free from suffering.

In *Buddhism with an Attitude*, B. Alan Wallace writes that people’s misguided pursuits commonly confuse happiness’ true sources with the eight mundane concerns, including “the pursuit of material acquisitions and the avoidance of their loss; the pursuit of stimulus-driven pleasure and the avoidance of discomfort; the pursuit of praise and the avoidance of blame; and the pursuit of good reputation and the avoidance of bad reputation.”³¹ Pursuing these eight mundane concerns as a means to happiness inevitably fails to provide lasting, sustainable well-being, because the conditions of life always change beyond their means to satisfy desires which are externalized, objectified, and conditioned.

Based on the Buddha’s teachings, desire is the obstacle obstructing our satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and transcendence. If desire takes the form of self-centered craving for pleasure (Skt. *tanhā*), then one’s actions will always unskillfully produce

³⁰ Shantideva’s *Bodhicharyavatara* (I.28) quoted in Alexander Berzin, “The Sources of Happiness According to Buddhism.”

³¹ Alan B. Wallace, *Buddhism with an Attitude: The Tibetan Seven-Point Mind-Training*, p. 14.

suffering disguised as false or transient happiness; but, if desire is directed toward the well-being of ourselves and others (Skt. *chandha*), then actions will skillfully produce authentic, durable forms of happiness, leading to their climax in enlightenment.³² The desire for well-being undermines the desire for pleasure, because it produces greater and greater levels of satisfaction; yet, wisdom is vitally important to discriminate pleasure from happiness and skillful from unskillful means. By dispelling the illusion of self and denying the power of its constituent attachments, wisdom effectively eliminates the self-centered impulses motivating *taṇhā* from the selfless impulses of *chandha*.

Psychologically, *taṇhā* and *chandha* generally express a difference between pursuing happiness extrinsically versus intrinsically. Within Eastern and Western thought, the Buddhist and Stoic traditions most prominently advocate the claim that happiness is derived from the mind (intrinsic), rather than from any external object or process (extrinsic). In the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha's teachings state, "We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts we make the world."³³ Since Buddhism claims "nothing comes from outside your mind,"³⁴ then obviously the mind is the only "basic equipment we need to achieve complete happiness."³⁵ There is also compelling scientific evidence that happiness depends on the mind, not the body,

³² For further discussion on *taṇhā* and *chanha*, see: P.A. Payutto, *Buddhist Economics: A Middle Way for the Market Place*.

³³ J. Kornfield, *The Teachings of the Buddha*, p. 4.

³⁴ S. Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, p. 34.

³⁵ Dalai Lama. *The Art of Happiness, 10th Anniversary Edition: A Handbook for Living*, p. 37.

considering most locked-in syndrome patients are happy, for instance, despite their physical incapacity to move or communicate.³⁶

Based on this hypothesis, if happiness is in the mind, then so is suffering. When seeking to alleviate suffering, Mason Fries states, “The reduction of stress can be approached by either altering the ‘stressor’ (external focus) or by altering one’s perception of the stressful situation (internal focus).”³⁷ In well-being studies on the effects of aging, scientific evidence suggests that perception of one’s circumstances impacts happiness more than actual circumstances.³⁸ Similarly, Buddhism pursues happiness intrinsically because it believes the characteristics we assign to objects which make them desirable or undesirable are mental projections, not intrinsic qualities of the objects themselves. Instead, Buddhism posits that happiness is determined by whether one reacts to suffering skillfully or unskillfully.

Meditation is the skill of developing the mind’s awareness to properly discern between the two. Exteroceptive attention and interoceptive attention distinguish between awareness which is externally and internally oriented. Whereas exteroceptive attention is located in the pre-frontal neocortex, a region associated with conceptual self-evaluation; interoceptive attention is located in areas such as the insula and posterior cingulate, which link the cortex to the limbic system and which allow direct bodily awareness without social- or self-referencing. Studies show that meditators exhibit greater interoceptive

³⁶ Bruno Marie-Aur lie et al., “A Survey on Self-assessed Well-being in a Cohort of Chronic Locked-in Syndrome Patients: Happy Majority, Miserable Minority.”

³⁷ Mason Fries, “Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction for the Changing Work Environment.”

³⁸ Karen L. Siedlecki et al., “Life Satisfaction across Adulthood: Different Determinants at Different Ages?”

awareness of their emotional states as a result of mental training.³⁹ In addition, when interoceptive awareness directs one's pursuits toward intrinsic goals, it produces more happiness just as the Buddhist tradition claims. Scientific evidence now demonstrates that pursuing meaningful relationships, personal growth and community service are some intrinsic goals that improve well-being, whereas pursuing wealth, fame, and vanity are some extrinsic goals that actually impair well-being.⁴⁰ Furthermore, there is evidence that intrinsic pursuits which improve one's sense of meaning and engagement are much more predictive of life satisfaction than extrinsic pursuits focused on pleasure.⁴¹

One of the primary reasons people nevertheless suffer in pursuit of happiness is because commercialism and consumerism are the dominant forces in modern culture and they exclusively promote extrinsic, materialistic values over intrinsic, pro-social values.⁴² If happiness is defined in the relationship between "personal positive feelings" and "a person gain," then the result will be selfishness and loneliness.⁴³ The strongest competing claim to the Buddhist tradition comes from Epicureanism and its associated philosophy of hedonism. Yet, despite its modern misrepresentation as a philosophy of overindulgence, it was originally founded by the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus who lived a spartan lifestyle, advocating happiness in the pursuit of companionship, self-sufficiency, and

³⁹ J.A. Sze et al., "Coherence between Emotional Experience and Physiology: Does Body Awareness Training Have an Impact?"

⁴⁰ Christopher P. Niemic et al., "The Path Taken: Consequences of Attaining Intrinsic and Extrinsic Aspirations in Post-College Life."

⁴¹ C. Peterson et al., "Orientations to Happiness and Life Satisfaction: The Full Life versus the Empty Life."

⁴² Tim Kasser, *The High Price of Materialism*.

⁴³ I.B. Mauss et al., "The Pursuit of Happiness Can Be Lonely."

contemplation, while warning against the confusion of human needs and desires by materialism and its false advertisement.⁴⁴

The inner turmoil and outer craving that makes us suffer in pursuit of happiness is in direct opposition to the inner peace and serenity that grounds the Buddhist meaning of *sukha*. By pursuing happiness intrinsically, we may experience contentment and more powerfully extend happiness outward to others. As the Dalai Lama received the Nobel Peace Prize, he emphasized this point:

“People inflict pain on others in the selfish pursuit of their happiness or satisfaction. Yet true happiness comes from a sense of inner peace and contentment, which in turn must be achieved through the cultivation of altruism, of love and compassion and elimination of ignorance, selfishness and greed.”⁴⁵

A UK study found that 56% of people define happiness as contentment, yet contentment is largely unstudied by positive psychology.⁴⁶ In general, the evolution of positive psychology can be divided into two stages following its official inception in 1998. Initially, research focused on the study of hedonism, a happiness derived from extrinsically oriented pursuits experienced through sensual or conceptual pleasure. As positive psychology developed over time, the sophistication of its concepts and understanding of happiness likewise grew deeper. In the second stage, research investigated eudaimonism, a happiness derived from intrinsically worthwhile pursuits⁴⁷ experienced through non-sensual feelings of pleasure. Since Buddhism pursues happiness intrinsically and views the desire for sense pleasures (*tanhā*) as the root of all suffering,

⁴⁴ *Philosophy: A Guide to Happiness*. DVD.

⁴⁵ Nobelprize.org, “The 14th Dalai Lama - Acceptance Speech.”

⁴⁶ Ilona Boniwell, “The Undervalued Component of Happiness.”

⁴⁷ R.M. Ryan et al., “Living Well: A Self-determination Theory Perspective on Eudaimonia,” p. 147.

sukha is obviously a concept of happiness that fits well within the second body of research on eudaimonism.

Scriptural evidence of this association can be found in a well-known parable from the *Lotus Sutra*, where a father entices ignorant children away from a burning house by first appealing to their desire for hedonic pleasure, then enumerating the eudaimonic pleasures that lead to greater happiness and fulfillment:

“And to attract them I say ‘These vehicles are grand, praised by the Aryas, and provided with most pleasant things; with such you are to sport, play, and divert yourselves in a noble manner. You will feel the great delight of the faculties, powers, constituents of Bodhi, meditations, the eight degrees of emancipation, self-concentration, and the results of self-concentration, and you will become greatly happy and cheerful.’”⁴⁸

The power of eudaimonic pleasures to motivate spiritual progress becomes explicitly clear in the Buddha’s teaching to the children, since the father and the burning flames are metaphors for the Buddha and *tanhā* respectively. This connection is also strengthened by scientific evidence that Buddhism distinguishes *sukha* as a branch of eudaimonism, not hedonism. In recent neuroscientific studies for example, the greater happiness experienced by Buddhist contemplatives as a result of long-term meditation practice is linked to “emotional balance and positive affects (involving, for instance, the left prefrontal cortex), rather than with sensations and pleasure (involving the reward areas of the brain).”⁴⁹

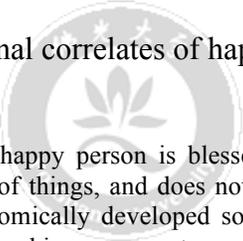
Thus far, it has been argued that people motivated by *tanhā* who are suffering in pursuit of happiness take a hedonic approach and view happiness as a pleasant feeling,

⁴⁸ David J. Lu, *Sources of Japanese History, Vol 1*, pp. 52-54.

⁴⁹ Matthieu Ricard, “The Dalai Lama: Happiness from Within,” p. 279.

primarily contingent on outer resources; whereas people motivated by *chandha* who are striving to be happy free from suffering take a eudaimonic approach and view happiness as a way of being, primarily contingent on inner resources. The relationship between inner and outer resources needs to be further clarified, however, because external resources are still essential in supporting one's internal development and they should not be categorically ignored as irrelevant aspects of *sukha*. Instead, the value of external conditions should be defined in terms of their contribution to internal development. In this way, a synthesis of insights from both positive psychology and Buddhism can be mutually reinforcing.

In 1999, thirty years of study on subjective well-being produced the following consensus on the internal and external correlates of happiness:



“We would emphasize that the happy person is blessed with a positive temperament, tends to look on the bright side of things, and does not ruminate excessively about bad events, and is living in an economically developed society, has social confidants, and possesses adequate resources for making progress toward valued goals.”⁵⁰

At a global level, the first world map of happiness combined 100 studies of 80,000 total people into a meta-analysis that found happiness is most prevalent in social democracies and associated most strongly with health (.62 correlation), wealth (.52 correlation), and education (.51 correlation);⁵¹ Yet, at an individual level, such “objective life circumstances have a negligible role to play in a theory of happiness,”⁵² because happiness is determined 50% by our genetic inheritance, 40% by our behavior, and only

⁵⁰ Ed Diener, Ed et al., “Subjective Well-Being: Three Decades of Progress,” p. 275.

⁵¹ Adrian White, “University of Leicester Produces the First-Ever ‘World Map of Happiness.’”

⁵² Richard Kammann. “Objective Circumstances, Life Satisfaction, and Sense of Well-being: Consistencies across Time and Place,” p. 148.

10% by our environment.⁵³ Just as ordinary people typically overvalue the external sources of happiness, prior studies on well-being also focus on improving external conditions because they are easiest to measure and manipulate; however, future studies on well-being need to better understand how 90% of happiness is determined by the internal factors associated with genetics and behavior.

Generally, an individual's genetics establishes a psychological set-point that prevents happiness from dramatically changing in response to stimuli. The set-point theory has been recently revised however,⁵⁴ to accommodate new evidence targeting the specific influences that create lasting positive changes, such as one's life goals, religion, and personal choices.⁵⁵ Overall, the greatest impact of genetic predispositions on happiness may arise in personality traits. The Big Five Personality Test⁵⁶ is a survey tool measuring five broad dimensions of an individual's personality, including openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. It offers a better window to well-being, because personality accounts for up to 35% of life satisfaction differences, compared to employment status and income, which each comprise 4% for instance.⁵⁷ Since personality traits are determined largely by one's genetics however, they are mostly immutable, offering little potential for growth.

⁵³ Sonja Lyubomirsky et al., "Pursuing Happiness: The Architecture of Sustainable Change."

⁵⁴ Ed Diener et al., "Beyond the Hedonic Treadmill: Revising the Adaptation Theory of Well-being."

⁵⁵ Bruce Headey et al., "Long-running German Panel Survey Shows that Personal and Economic Choices, not just Genes, Matter for Happiness."

⁵⁶ The Big Five Personality Test. <http://www.outofservice.com/bigfive/>.

⁵⁷ Christopher J. Boyce et al., "Is Personality Fixed? Personality Changes as Much as 'Variable' Economic Factors and More Strongly Predicts Changes to Life Satisfaction."

Rather, the greatest potential for transforming suffering into happiness is the cultivation of positive character traits which underlie the 40% of happiness determined by our behavior. Unlike personality traits, character traits are more malleable, because they rely upon beliefs which can be changed. If someone believes others should be treated with respect for instance, kindness would likely be habitually reinforced in their behavior. Both Buddhism and now positive psychology underline the relative importance of intentional thought and action in determining individual happiness. In the words of positive psychology's co-founder, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "Contrary to what most of us believe, happiness does not simply happen to us. It's something that we make happen."⁵⁸

Of course, though happiness can be habitually formed by one's character and beliefs, it requires sustained effort and proper training. Since *sukha* is eudaimonic, Buddhism conceives happiness as a trait, which can be enhanced through the specific exercises and teachings it provides. Likewise, positive psychology's study of *eudaimonia* investigates the contribution of cultivating universal character strengths⁵⁹ by enhancing inner resources like generosity, mindfulness, compassion, and gratitude. Within the extant body of research on *eudaimonia*, *sukha* represents a unique concept of happiness focused on three key drivers of change, namely virtue (Skt. *sīla*), meditation (Skt.

⁵⁸ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Good Business: Leadership, Flow, and the Making of Meaning*.

⁵⁹ K. Dahlsgaard et al., "Shared Virtue: The Convergence of Valued Human Strengths across Culture and History," Nansook Park et al., "Character Strengths in Fifty-four Nations and the Fifty US States."

samādhi), and wisdom (Skt. *prajñā*).⁶⁰ Collectively, these three elements comprise Buddhism's threefold path to happiness.⁶¹

2.3 The Threefold Path to Happiness

Concerning the first of these, the *Upajjhatthana Sutra* explains how Buddhism's theory of *karma* provides the total basis for understanding the origins of virtuous behavior and its various outcomes:

“I am the owner of my actions (Skt. *karma*), heir to my actions, born of my actions, related through my actions, and have my actions as my arbitrator. Whatever I do, for good or for evil, to that will I fall heir.”⁶²

In Barbra Clayton's study of Śāntideva, the interchangeable use of good karma (Skt. *punya*), good conduct (Skt. *sīla*) and well-being (Skt. *śubhā*) provides textual evidence that *eudaimonia* is the fruit of good karma.⁶³ This link between virtue and happiness is further referenced in chapter one of the *Dhammapada*:

“If one speaks or acts with wicked mind,
because of that, suffering follows one...
If one speaks or acts with pure mind,
because of that, happiness follows one...”⁶⁴

Confirming the Buddhist claim, there is now scientific evidence that happiness increases as virtuousness increases, though there is a more apparent increase in those who are less

⁶⁰ For extant psychological research on Buddhism and happiness, see: P. Ekman, P. et al., “Buddhist and Psychological Perspectives on Emotions and Well-Being,” Alan B. Wallace and Shauna L. Shapiro, “Mental Balance and Well-Being: Building Bridges between Buddhism and Western Psychology,” D.K. Nauriyal, D.K. et al., *Buddhist Thought and Applied Psychological Research: Transcending the Boundaries*.

⁶¹ This threefold structure is originally presented in the *Visuddhimagga* (Path of Purification), an early Buddhist manual compiled in the 4th century by Buddhagosa.

⁶² Bhikkhu Thanissaro trans. “Upajjhatthana Sutta: Subjects for Contemplation” (AN 5.57).

⁶³ Barbra R. Clayton, *Moral Theory in Śāntideva's Śikṣāsamuccaya: Cultivating the Fruits of Virtue*.

⁶⁴ Thera Nārada trans. “Yamaka Vagga: The Twin Verses.”

virtuous.⁶⁵ Regarding the second path to happiness, Buddhism's meditative traditions offer techniques capable of transforming one's beliefs and character to increase virtuousness. For instance, scientific studies on mindfulness and gratitude show that more mindful people are both more grateful and more willing to help others.⁶⁶

A recent explosion in scientific research on meditation seeks to understand its underlying mechanisms by targeting motivations, processes, and outcomes, outlined for example in the Liverpool Mindfulness Model.⁶⁷ The leader in this area is Richard Davidson, whose recently published book, *The Emotional Life of Your Brain*, explains how Buddhist meditation catalyzes change in specific brain circuits associated to six emotional styles, developing an individual's resilience, outlook, social intuition, context, self-awareness, and attention. By applying meditative techniques to scientific research on well-being, Davidson has demonstrated that individuals can transform their minds, change their brains, and act more virtuously using what he calls "neurally inspired behavioral interventions."⁶⁸ Since meditation can cause physical changes in the brain that reinforce positive mental states and inspire virtuous behavior, transforming the world is viewed as an extension of transforming the mind. In the *Art of Happiness*, Davidson's spiritual teacher, the Dalai Lama, encourages investigating positive growth through research on meditation and brain plasticity:

⁶⁵ W. Ruch et al., "Character Strengths as Predictors of the 'Good Life' in Austria, Germany and Switzerland."

⁶⁶ Anthony H. Ahrens et al., "Facets of Mindfulness as Predictors of Gratitude: A Daily Diary Study."

⁶⁷ See Figure 5

⁶⁸ Richard J. Davidson, *The Emotional Life of Your Brain: How Its Unique Patterns Affect the Way You Think, Feel, and Live-- and How You Can Change Them*.

“The systematic training of the mind- the cultivation of happiness, the genuine inner transformation by deliberately selecting and focusing on positive mental states and challenging negative mental states- is possible because of the very structure and function of the brain....the wiring in our brains is not static, not irrevocably fixed. Our brains are also adaptable.”⁶⁹

Presently, the majority of research on meditation is divided into two programs focused on either mindfulness meditation or compassion meditation. These two forms are particularly widespread and representative of current meditative traditions, sharing important commonalities⁷⁰ and differences. For example, both mindfulness meditation and compassion meditation improve one’s emotional stability and stress-response by decreasing activation of the right amygdala in response to emotional stimuli; though compassion meditation in particular increases a practitioner’s amygdala activation when viewing suffering, resulting in enhanced feelings of compassion and decreased instances of depression.⁷¹ Both of these changes are reported by practitioners in ordinary, non-meditative states, proving that mindfulness meditation and compassion meditation both affect enduring changes that persist beyond the effects of tasks or stimuli.

The mainstream popularity of mindfulness meditation was largely achieved through the spread of secular mindfulness programs first developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn in the late twentieth century. The practice is universally appealing, as Kabat-Zinn notes,

⁶⁹ Dalai Lama, *The Art of Happiness, 10th Anniversary Edition: A Handbook for Living*, pp. 44-45.

⁷⁰ For research on the link between mindfulness and compassion, see: S.L. Shapiro et al., “Effects of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction on Medical and Premedical Students.” Shauna L. Shapiro et al., “Teaching Self-Care to Caregivers: Effects of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction on the Mental Health of Therapists in Training.”

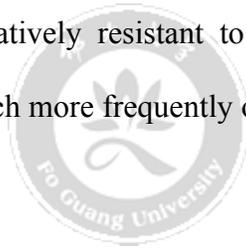
⁷¹ Gaëlle Desbordes et al., “Effects of Mindful-attention and Compassion Meditation Training on Amygdala Response to Emotional Stimuli in an Ordinary, Non-meditative State,” p. 292.

because “All of us have the capacity to be mindful. All it involves is cultivating our ability to pay attention in the present moment.”⁷² According to Kabat-Zinn:

“Mindfulness can be thought of as moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness, cultivated by paying attention in a specific way, that is, in the present moment, and as non-reactively, as non-judgmentally, and as openheartedly as possible.”⁷³

The unique effects of mindfulness meditation are related to four key components, including attention regulation, emotion regulation, body awareness, and sense of self.⁷⁴

The duration of mindfulness training predicts the degree to which certain structural features of the brain are developed,⁷⁵ though there’s not yet sufficient evidence clarifying the casual relationship between the training and its specific outcomes. Generally, it is understood that enhancement of emotion regulation requires longer periods of training since the affective system is relatively resistant to change, whereas enhancement in attention-related processes are much more frequently observed, even after brief periods of training.⁷⁶



A large body of evidence shows that mindfulness meditation increases alpha and theta activity and improves cognitive control and self-monitoring by activating areas associated to those functions, namely the prefrontal cortex (PFC) and the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC).⁷⁷ Improvements in conscious awareness via these functions are

⁷² Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*, p. 11.

⁷³ Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Coming to Our Senses*, p. 108.

⁷⁴ Britta K. Hölzel, et al., “How Does Mindfulness Meditation Work? Proposing Mechanisms of Action from a Conceptual and Neural Perspective.”

⁷⁵ Britta K. Hölzel et al., “Mindfulness Practice Leads to Increases in Regional Brain Gray Matter Density.”

⁷⁶ Micah Allen et al., “Cognitive-Affective Neural Plasticity following Active-Controlled Mindfulness Intervention.”

⁷⁷ A. Chiesa and A. Serretti, “A Systematic Review of Neurobiological and Clinical Features of Mindfulness Meditations.”

additionally supported by mindfulness meditation's deactivation of the default mode network, which is responsible for lapses in attention and self-conscious mind-wandering and which has been implicated in disorders such as anxiety, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, Alzheimer's disease, autism, and schizophrenia.⁷⁸

There are many other benefits of mindfulness meditation that promote happiness and well-being, but the most direct contribution was reported by Matt Killingsworth's large scale study of mindfulness, in which an iPhone application captured 250,000 reports of people's thoughts, feelings, and actions throughout daily life. The study found that the average person spends 47% of their waking hours thinking about something other than what they're doing, and this mind-wandering is a significant cause rather than a consequence of their unhappiness. Even more significant, the study found that happiness changed more from moment to moment than from individual to individual, suggesting that happiness is more impacted by our attendance to everyday experience than by our objective circumstances. Mindfulness is therefore a key driver of happiness, whose role in determining happiness supersedes the importance of conditional factors, like marriage, wealth, or status.⁷⁹

The second research program on meditation studies the effects of compassion and loving-kindness, applied in several different forms and contexts. At Emory University for example, Geshe Lobsang Negi used the *lojong* tradition of Tibetan Buddhism to create a secularized analytical compassion program, called cognitively-based compassion training

⁷⁸ Judson A. Brewer, "Meditation Experience is Associated with Differences in Default Mode Network Activity and Connectivity."

⁷⁹ Matthew A. Killingsworth and Daniel T. Gilbert. "A Wandering Mind is an Unhappy Mind," p. 932.

(CBCT). CBCT has proven effective at improving psychological flexibility, reducing the suppression or avoidance of intrusive thoughts and emotions, increasing positive emotions and social connectedness, enhancing empathic accuracy, and reducing neuroendocrine, inflammatory, and behavioral responses to psychosocial stress, implicated in the development of physical and mental diseases, including depression.⁸⁰

Like mindfulness meditation, there are many observed benefits of compassion meditation which are similarly indirect, based on its ability to affect lasting improvements in life satisfaction and positive emotions resulting from enhanced personal resources, such as increased mindfulness, purposefulness, and social support, as well as decreased instances of mental and physical illness.⁸¹ Compassion's direct benefit to happiness and well-being however is its ability to reduce suffering, as indicated by the use and meaning of the Buddhist term *karuṇā*.⁸² A study of another program, called compassion cultivation training (CCT), has shown that the reduction of suffering through compassion can be intentionally cultivated in three forms— directed toward others, received from others, or directed inward to oneself.⁸³ Though these three distinct forms can be separately

⁸⁰ Pace et al. "Effect of Compassion Meditation on Neuroendocrine, Innate Immune and Behavioral Responses to Psychosocial Stress," Pace et al., "Innate Immune, Neuroendocrine and Behavioral Responses to Psychosocial Stress Do Not Predict Subsequent Compassion Meditation Practice Time," J.S. Mascaro et al., "Compassion Meditation Enhances Empathic Accuracy and Related Neural Activity."

⁸¹ Barbara L. Fredrickson et al., "Open Hearts Build Lives: Positive Emotions, Induced Through Loving-kindness Meditation, Build Consequential Personal Resources."

⁸² T.W. Rhys, Davids and William Stede. *Pali-English Dictionary*, p. 197.

⁸³ Hooria Jazaieri et al., "Enhancing Compassion: A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Compassion Cultivation Training Program."

cultivated by various training programs, they are also intimately linked, since self-compassion is highly correlated with compassion toward others.⁸⁴

The path to happiness culminates in wisdom, the third and final driver of positive growth. Traditionally, wisdom refers to a greater awareness and ability to discern skillful from unskillful action as the result of accumulated experience. Studies confirm that both wisdom and well-being increase with age and wisdom improves well-being to a greater and greater extent as we age.⁸⁵ However, within the Buddhist framework, wisdom can also be intentionally cultivated like virtue and meditation, but its meaning takes an unconventional form.

Differences between Western and Buddhist concepts of well-being are fundamentally divided according to distinct views of self and agency. Whereas Western concepts emphasize individuality, self-expression, and the spontaneous satisfaction of one's desires, Buddhism considers the unregulated expression of desires and the freedom to do what one pleases as central constituents of *duḥkha*. The resolution of determinism and free will at the heart of well-being in the West is notably absent from Buddhism.

Concerning well-being, the function of wisdom is instead to replace the ignorant view of self and self-interest with an understanding of selflessness (Skt. *anātman*) and interdependence, so that our well-being is not distinguished from the well-being of others.

As Mark Epstein writes:

⁸⁴ William P. Henry et al., "Patient and Therapist Introject, Interpersonal Process, and Differential Psychotherapy Outcome."

⁸⁵ Igor Grossmann et al., "A Route to Well-being: Intelligence vs. Wise Reasoning."

“Buddhism teaches us that happiness does not come from any kind of acquisitiveness, be it material or psychological. Happiness comes from letting go. In Buddhism, the impenetrable, separate, and individuated self is more of the problem than the solution.”⁸⁶

Recently, the concept of a stable, unified ‘self’ has been likewise deconstructed by scientific research, which affirms a psychological constructionist approach to the mind. Cognition and emotion are not separate, isolated processes, but rather integrated operations engaging various brain regions to produce experience and perception across a range of discrete emotional categories.⁸⁷ The mind’s dynamic processes are not singularly organized by any individual substance or ‘self;’ but instead based on distinct but interacting brain modules often in conflict with one another. The module that causes us to crave unhealthy foods now is in conflict with the module that monitors our long-term health, and the module that causes us to cooperate and act altruistically is in conflict with the module motivating competition and greed, for instance.⁸⁸ Supporting the Buddhist claim, scientific research demonstrates that people who possess a self-centered psychological style pursue a fluctuating form of hedonic happiness, whereas people who possess a selfless psychological style pursue a more durable form of eudaimonic happiness. Important formative variables determining psychological styles include one’s culture, education, profession, religion, mental training, experience, and age.⁸⁹

According to neurological studies, the experience of selfhood arises when tracking and controlling global bodily properties are represented using an integrated

⁸⁶ Mark Epstein, *Going to Pieces without Falling Apart: A Buddhist Perspective on Wholeness*.

⁸⁷ Kristen A. Lindquist et al., “The Brain Basis of Emotion: A Meta-analytic Review.”

⁸⁸ Robert Kurzban, *Why Everyone (Else) Is a Hypocrite: Evolution and the Modular Mind*.

⁸⁹ Michael Dambrun and Matthieu Ricard. “Self-Centeredness and Selflessness: A Theory of Self-Based Psychological Functioning and Its Consequences for Happiness,” Michael Dambrun et al., “Measuring Happiness: From Fluctuating Happiness to Authentic-Durable Happiness.”

body-model. Identification with one's self-representation can be weakened when the body-model is experienced as a representation.⁹⁰ The neuroscientist Andrew Newberg has located two areas of cortex, which he calls the "orientation association areas," consisting of one area in the left hemisphere that defines the limits of one's body-model, and a corresponding area in the right hemisphere that tracks the body-model's location in space. The practice of meditation and collective rituals like chanting have been shown to disconnect these two areas in the brain, producing states of mystical union in which one simultaneously loses their sense of self and expands their conscious awareness beyond the traditional boundaries of three dimensional space.⁹¹ In addition, the practice of mindfulness meditation has been shown to decouple distinct modes of self-reference, so that extended self-reference linking experience across time is distinguished from momentary self-reference centered on the present.⁹²

In total, the goal of Buddhism's extensive meditative and yogic traditions is the cultivation of concentration (Skt. *samādhi*), in which "the subject-object distinction and one's sense of an individual self disappears in a state usually described as one of supreme peace, bliss, and illumination."⁹³ This state shares affinities with Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's characterization of "flow," in which a state of optimal experience and concentrated engagement dissolves self-consciousness and creates abiding happiness and well-being.⁹⁴ The overall function of wisdom is to dispel the illusion of 'self' and replace

⁹⁰ Olaf Blanke and Thomas Metzinger. "Full-body Illusions and Minimal Phenomenal Selfhood."

⁹¹ A. Newberg et al., *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief*.

⁹² Norman A.S. Farb et al., "Attending to the Present: Mindfulness Meditation Reveals Distinct Neural Modes of Self-Reference."

⁹³ Columbia University Press, ed. "Yoga."

⁹⁴ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*.

self-centered psychological functioning with a realization of emptiness, or non-duality, so that one may accurately discern reality and determine a skillful course of action leading to happiness and well-being.

2.4 Conclusion

In summary, the preceding analysis provides the theoretical basis for a Buddhist psychology of happiness, using scientific evidence to distinguish *sukha* as a distinctly Buddhist concept, exhibiting five characteristics:

1. *Sukha* is the complementary opposite of *duhkha*, ultimately perfected when greed, hatred, and delusion are eliminated during one's enlightenment.
2. *Sukha* is a branch of eudaimonism, not hedonism, which is motivated by non-sensual, transcendent desires as opposed to sensual, mundane desires.
3. *Sukha* is intrinsically pursued by desiring well-being for both oneself and others (*chandha*); it is not extrinsically pursued by selfishly desiring one's own satisfaction (*taṇhā*).
4. *Sukha* is a trait, not a state, which internalizes value and which primarily depends on the cultivation of inner personal resources.
5. *Sukha* is pursued by a threefold path, in which virtue, meditation, and wisdom serve as the functioning drivers of both internal and external transformation.

Chapter 3 A Buddhist Economics of Happiness

3.1 Economics' Utility Maximization Model

Following the publication of *Foundations of Economic Analysis* in 1947, Paul Samuelson inspired economics to rely exclusively on mathematic formulation for explanations of human welfare and decision making.¹ Today, modern macroeconomics fails to successfully provide happiness and well-being largely because its principle approach, called dynamic stochastic general equilibrium, uses a series of simplistic, universally applicable assumptions to map a complete economic model onto an incomplete picture of reality. The pioneering economist Robert Lucas described his creation of an 'analogue economy' as "the construction of a mechanical artificial world populated by interacting robots" for the purpose of allowing economic theory to "be put on a computer and run."² Although economists have produced ever more sophisticated calibrations of their models by accommodating real-world data, the false assumptions underlying them fundamentally produce flawed policy.

As the Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz, wrote:

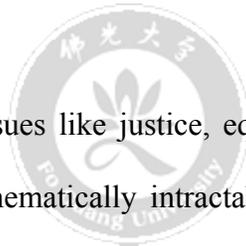
"...in general, when risk markets are incomplete and information is imperfect, markets are not constrained Pareto optimal: the Invisible Hand does not work."³

¹ Kamran Mofid, "The Roots of Economics -- And Why it has Gone So Wrong."

² Robert E. Lucas Jr., "On the Mechanics of Economic Development."

³ Joseph E. Stiglitz. "The Invisible Hand and Modern Welfare Economics," p. 16.

Yet, although economics' general equilibrium principle was falsified decades ago, a large degree of economic miscalculation and mismanagement remains informed by the enduring myth that individual self-interest and corporate profit-maximization guides markets toward a stable, optimally efficient state.⁴ Economics' failure to sustainably and efficiently provide well-being is rooted in the presumption that people make decisions based on individual maximization of 'utility,' where utility is defined in the consumption of goods or services and where more consumption is preferred to less.⁵ This exceedingly narrow focus on consumption as a means to approximate welfare removes the economy from its greater social and environmental contexts, while creating an infinite growth paradigm driven by consumption, regardless of its personal, social, and environmental costs.



Moreover, fundamental issues like justice, equality, and ethics are excluded by economics because they are mathematically intractable, incapable of quantification by current methods of calculation and evaluation.⁶ Economic theory itself is based on the same selective interpretation of reality. For example, the foundational theorems of welfare economics established by Adam Smith's seminal work, *The Wealth of Nations*, were extrapolated without reference to their original context in Smith's earlier work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which resulted in the neglect of important issues related to "the demands of rationality, the need for recognizing the plurality of human motivations, the connections between ethics and economics, and the codependent rather than free-

⁴ Jonathan Schlefer, *The Assumptions Economists Make*.

⁵ Andrew Mas-Colell et al., *Microeconomic Theory*.

⁶ Kamran Mofid, "The Roots of Economics -- And Why it has Gone So Wrong."

standing role of institutions in general, and free markets in particular, in the functioning of the economy.”⁷

In summary, economic models based on simplified assumptions that approximate reality can never explain the potential outcomes of real world systems, when agents relying on their own disparate beliefs and behaviors act in ways that are different from what is assumed by the models. To successfully marry economic theory and policy, universal axioms that deduce behavior, preferences, and market dynamics must be verified by a more holistic, inductive science of observed phenomena, examining deviations in beliefs, organizational behavior, and psychology.⁸ In order to develop a more inclusive economics accounting the diversity of elements impacting both individual and collective well-being, this chapter will synthesize scientific research to form a theoretical basis for a Buddhist economics of happiness that expands rational, self-interest to include important aspects of our behavior difficult to quantify and model, such as the contribution of irrational emotions, perceptions, and ethical altruism.

The following four sections will be divided into two parts, in order to clearly separate empirical research informing economics (3.2 and 3.4) from a theoretical Buddhist response (3.3 and 3.5). In section 3.2, the relationship between absolute wealth and relative wealth will be discussed purely in factual terms, using research in economics to understand how two fundamentally different orientations to development direct benefits to the well-being of individuals versus collectives. In section 3.3, an alternative

⁷ Amartya Sen, “The Economist Manifesto.”

⁸ John Kay, “The Map Is Not the Territory: An Essay on the State of Economics.”

Buddhist model of utility will be proposed to argue the benefits of calculating shared interest, as opposed to self-interest, so that economic benefits may be distributed beyond one's individual desires (*taṇhā*) and toward a holistic, integrative well-being (*chandha*). Then, in section 3.4 and 3.5, *taṇhā* and *chandha* will be discussed as the motivational causes of suffering and happiness respectively, by focusing on the effects of hedonic adaptation versus compassion and altruism.

3.2 Growth of Absolute versus Relative Wealth

In our culture, 80% of people believe money can bring happiness. On average, people think \$161,000 (USD) per year is required to feel “happy,” and \$1.8 million (USD) is required to be “wealthy.”⁹ In another study, people believed they would be twice as happy if they made \$55,000 instead of \$25,000 per year, when in fact they were just 9% more satisfied with the additional income.¹⁰ In 1974, Richard A. Easterlin discovered the Easterlin paradox,¹¹ which shows the rich are generally happier than the poor, though neither GDP growth nor higher GDP per capita increase happiness once development satisfies basic needs. It also shows that people judge their lives better the richer they become, though an individual's day-to-day happiness is unaffected by income

⁹ “Skandia International Wealth Sentiment Monitor.”

¹⁰ Lara B. Aknin et al., “From Wealth to Well-being? Money Matters, But Less than People Think.”

¹¹ Richard A. Easterlin, “Does Economic Growth Improve the Human Lot? Some Empirical Evidence.”

improvements beyond a sufficient amount, about \$75,000 a year in the United States¹² or \$15,000 a year globally¹³

Easterlin was challenged in 2008 by Stevenson and Wolfers,¹⁴ who demonstrated a logarithmic correlation between GDP growth,¹⁵ income improvements, and happiness. Admittedly, Easterlin's own data demonstrates a .5 correlation between happiness and economic growth,¹⁶ while Angus Deaton's data shows an even stronger .8 correlation between happiness and income.¹⁷ Ruut Veenhoven may provide the most comprehensive critique, including (1) time series data showing notable exceptions of improved happiness in developed economies during the last forty years of growth,¹⁸ (2) a "needs theory" inferring happiness from the quality of affective experience,¹⁹ and (3) compound measures multiplying life expectancy by quality of life.²⁰ After nearly forty years since Easterlin's ground breaking study, there continues to be significant debate on the impact of absolute and relative income on well-being. However, in large part, disagreement concerning the importance of absolute and relative income was caused by differences in

¹² Daniel Kahneman and Angus Deaton, "High Income Improves Evaluation of Life but not Emotional Well-being."

¹³ Bruno S. Frey and Alois Stutzer. *Happiness and Economics: How the Economy and Institutions Affect Human Well-Being*.

¹⁴ Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers. "Economic Growth and Subjective Well-Being: Reassessing the Easterlin Paradox," D.W. Sacks et al., "The New Stylized Facts about Income and Subjective Well-being."

¹⁵ See Figure 6

¹⁶ Ruut Veenhoven, "Is Happiness Relative?"

¹⁷ Angus Deaton, "Income, Health, and Well-Being around the World: Evidence from the Gallup World Poll."

¹⁸ Ruut Veenhoven and Michael Hagerty, "Rising Happiness in Nations 1946-2004: A Reply to Easterlin," Ruut Veenhoven and Floris Vergunst, "The Easterlin Illusion: Economic Growth Does Go with Greater Happiness."

¹⁹ Ruut Veenhoven, "How Do We Assess How Happy We Are?"

²⁰ Ruut Veenhoven, "The Four Qualities of Life: Ordering Concepts and Measures of the Good Life."

the particular questions, methodology, and population surveyed,²¹ and does not disprove two important observations.

Firstly, the diminishing return of money on happiness causes a decoupling between continued economic growth and improved well-being. As economies develop and individuals become financially secure, happiness increasingly depends on how incomes relate to each other, such that the increased well-being afforded by a country's absolute income or rising GDP may be undermined by disparities in relative income. Generally, income inequality lowers a country's happiness on average, without affecting its statistical range;²² however, the more devastating impact of inequality on well-being appears in its correlation to poorer outcomes related to health, imprisonment, education, stress, status competition, fairness and trust.²³

Secondly, the discrepancy between evaluating and experiencing happiness results from a difference in income's impact upon life satisfaction versus positive emotion.²⁴ Whereas people better evaluate their lives the larger their incomes, emotional wellbeing is determined by the quality of one's relationships. This distinction is indicative of the separable contributions of diverse needs on well-being, outlined in part by Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Manfred Max-Neef's matrix of human needs. Whereas life satisfaction is related to basic needs, positive emotion is related to social and respect needs, and negative emotion is related to deficiencies in basic needs, respect needs, and

²¹ Carol Graham, "More on the Easterlin Paradox: A Response to Wolfers."

²² "Inequality and happiness: I dream of Gini."

²³ Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson. *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*.

²⁴ Daniel Kahneman and Angus Deaton, "High Income Improves Evaluation of Life but not Emotional Well-being."

autonomy needs. The effect of income does not have any additional impact on well-being beyond what is accounted for by the effects of needs. Additionally, the importance of absolute income is challenged by comparable levels of well-being reported among poor populations who satisfy higher order needs related to social and psychological well-being, despite failing to satisfy very basic material needs.²⁵

At the heart of these two observations also lies a global shift in values,²⁶ explaining the transformation of people's perceptions and feelings of happiness as modernizing societies struggling for material survival become postmodern societies valuing democratic self-expression and freedom of choice. As freedom of choice and material abundance spread, happiness becomes bound by heightened expectations. As a result, relative affluence may cause individuals to judge their lives as comparatively better, despite feeling increasingly dissatisfied, regretful, or blameworthy at failing to obtain optimal outcomes.²⁷

Two cases relevant to this thesis are the United States and China. Happiness in the United States has stagnated for over half a century, in part because top-earners skyrocketing incomes have drastically outpaced meaningful improvements in average living standards, while happiness in China has actually fallen in the last thirty years,²⁸ due to an increase in the number of "frustrated achievers,"²⁹ dissatisfied by their growing

²⁵ Louis Tay and Ed Diener. "Needs and Subjective Well-being around the World."

²⁶ Ronald Inglehart et al., "Development, Freedom, and Rising Happiness: A Global Perspective (1981-2007)."

²⁷ Barry Schwartz, *The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less*.

²⁸ Hilke Brockmann, "The China Puzzle: Falling Happiness in a Rising Economy."

²⁹ Carol Graham and Stefano Pettinato, "Frustrated Achievers: Winners, Losers, and Subjective Well Being in New Market Economics."

disadvantage compared to the country's elite. Although the U.S. and China are the respective homes of the world's wealthiest people and the world's fastest growing economy, high levels of income inequality and social stratification produce lower levels of fairness and trust,³⁰ in contradistinction to the world's happiest country, Denmark,³¹ where low levels of inequality and materialism contribute to social cohesion and well-being.

Logically, only wealth creation with equitable wealth distribution creates more happiness on the whole, because relative income disparity undermines absolute income improvements. Among liberals, wealth redistribution is always proposed as the solution to economic and social inequality and there's strong evidence that progressive taxes in fact create more happiness thanks to the social services they provide.³² However, despite social democracies being the happiest countries, there is no causal evidence suggesting it is the result of their specific tax, spending, and regulatory policies. Instead, income inequality has been increasing globally, not only in unequal societies like the United States and China, but also in traditionally equal societies like Finland and Sweden.³³ The spread of globalization and technology has increased inequality overall in the last forty years, because a gradual shift of wealth from labor to capital has not significantly improved the purchasing power of the working class, but instead distributed economic gains to a small upper class who own the means of production.

³⁰ Shigehiro Oishi et al., "Income Inequality and Happiness." Richard A. Easterlin et al., "China's Life Satisfaction, 1990–2010."

³¹ John Helliwell et al., ed. "The World Happiness Report."

³² Shigehiro Oishi et al., "Progressive Taxation and the Subjective Well-Being of Nations."

³³ OECD, "Growing Income Inequality in OECD Countries: What Drives it and How Can Policy Tackle it?"

Though equitable wealth distribution is a useful solution defensible from a Buddhist position,³⁴ it is limited by political and moral views that divide people along partisan lines and it does not address underlying problems related to our measure of utility and the ways in which we conceive and pursue happiness. As argued, the global environmental crisis is largely precipitated by the excessive salience which money and economic growth command in the promotion of well-being. The maximization of self-interest and corporate interest creates an infinite growth paradigm exclusively focused on increasing absolute income, rather than improving the share of relative income, which arguably impacts happiness and well-being to a greater extent. In addition, although money is essential to secure basic needs, its importance to well-being declines relative to a broader range of factors.

Comparing the perceived importance of absolute income with its limited contribution to well-being, there appears a dramatic inflation between the expected value of money and its real return. Ignorance of this discrepancy continues to encourage widespread misappropriation of time and resources to accumulate money and accelerate growth far beyond their capacity to efficiently and sustainably provide well-being. The following section will outline a Buddhist model for utility based on a more holistic understanding of well-being that integrates the individual and collective good, in an effort to improve upon modern economics' incomplete model, calculating an individual's interest, as generally separate from the interests of others, society, and the environment.

³⁴ Caroline Mosler, "Can Buddhism Inform the Contemporary Western Liberal Debate on the Distribution of Wealth?"

3.3 A Buddhist Model of Shared Value

As David R. Loy argues in “Healing Ecology,”³⁵ our individuation from each other creates a sense of insecurity and lacking, which we attempt to fill by constructing a self through external acquisition and fulfillment. Technological and economic progress controls the conditions of our existence in an attempt to find security and eliminate a modern, secular anxiety about our place and purpose in the universe; however, the pursuit of growth is a means mistaken to be our aim in life, which can never satisfactorily solve our underlying insecurity. The Buddhist path offers an opportunity to end suffering and realize lasting happiness by penetrating the illusion of separateness.

Rather than rely on ethics or morality for this realization, Buddhists who understand non-dualism will naturally act morally and ethically, because they consider their welfare synonymous to the welfare of others. The emergence of individual and collective well-being expressed in the realization of this awakening is the sole purpose of the bodhisattva path. In the classic Mahāyāna text on the way of the bodhisattva, Śāntideva states:

“All who are suffering in the world [are suffering] because of desire for their own happiness. All who are happy in the world [are happy] because of desire for others’ happiness.”³⁶

The Buddhist definition of utility and well-being adopted by this thesis relies on the conception of *sukha* outlined in the preceding chapter. As mentioned, desire in the form of *chandha* discriminates the true sources of happiness by establishing a link between

³⁵ David R. Loy, “Healing Ecology.”

³⁶ BCA VIII.129 quoted in Amod Lele, “Śāntideva (fl. 8th C. CE).”

individual and collective well-being, whereas desire in the form of *taṇhā* results in counterfeit happiness or suffering that is oriented towards one's ego-satisfaction. Since *sukha* is motivated by *chandha*, not *taṇhā*, utility and well-being are likewise defined in terms of shared interest, rather than self-interest.

The root conflict between economics and morality stems from the competing view that well-being is motivated by either the celebration or cessation of selfish desire. Economics has traditionally studied human behavior in terms of choices and preferences that satisfy self-interest, as Adam Smith once wrote:

“It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love.”³⁷

On the other hand, morality expands one's self-interest to encompass greater and greater numbers of other beings:

“Our moral appreciation is extraordinarily sensitive to our desires and passions, which should not surprise us since it is not exaggerating very greatly to say that our moral appreciation can only exist in the absence of our selfish desires, in the absence of exclusive love of self.”³⁸

In an effort to incorporate ethics into economics, Buddhism offers resources that could potentially resolve this conflict by revising our understanding of selfish desires as the central, defining motivation of economic life. Since current economic orthodoxy describes economic decision-making using rational models, which poorly describe the deeply emotional needs and desires driving economic life (i.e. consumer demand, consumer choice, and consumer satisfaction), Buddhist economics will also be offered as

³⁷ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, I.2.2.

³⁸ R. Beehler, *Moral Life*.

an alternative framework, not merely conceived as an ethical economics, but more broadly as a science of human value-exchange.³⁹

This framework adds to recent research in positive psychology, neuroeconomics, and contemplative science which illustrates our intrinsic moral natures and our innate ability to transform self-interest into altruism using psychological, economic, and contemplative interventions. One key academic resource contributing to this new knowledge base is the association for Happiness Economics and Interpersonal Relations (HEIRs), which establishes reciprocity and non-instrumental human relationships as key constituents connecting individual and collective happiness.⁴⁰

A review of neuroeconomics research on pro-social decision making produces evidence that self-centered versus other-centered individuals make cooperative decisions based on two primary, independent drivers corresponding to two distinct neural networks. Self-centered individuals typically adopt economically rational strategies which engage their brain's cognitive control systems and which pursue extrinsic incentives; whereas other-centered individuals take socially rational strategies that rely more on social cognition systems and focus on trust signals to determine cooperative opportunities built on strong relationships.⁴¹ Though cooperation is an intuitive human impulse, it is undermined by periods of calculative self-reflection and deliberation.⁴² Moreover, in studies of blood donors, those who were paid were less likely to donate than those who

³⁹ P.A. Payutto, *Buddhist Economics: A Middle Way for the Market Place*.

⁴⁰ HEIRS (Happiness Economics and Interpersonal Relations) Archive:
<http://www.happinesseconomics.net/ocs/index.php/heirs/index/search/titles>.

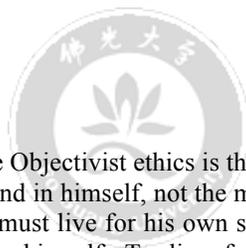
⁴¹ Carolyn H. Declerck et al., "When Do People Cooperate? The Neuroeconomics of Prosocial Decision Making."

⁴² David G. Rand et al., "Spontaneous Giving and Calculated Greed."

gave freely.⁴³ Extrinsic motivations not only supplanted people’s intrinsic motivations, they also decreased their willingness to contribute value.

These two separate approaches help explain how the extrinsic and intrinsic pursuits of happiness motivated by *taṇhā* and *chandha* relate differently to cooperative decisions based on self-interest versus shared interest. The first approach currently dominates economic ideology due to the popular appeal of free-market libertarianism and its willful neglect of altruism as an intrinsic human motivation. The intellectual foundation of free-market libertarianism was significantly informed by Ayn Rand’s philosophy, called Objectivism, which upholds rational self-interest as the cornerstone of all economic relationships and human morality. In her philosophical treatise, entitled *The*

Virtue of Selfishness, Rand states:



“The basic social principle of the Objectivist ethics is that just as life is an end in itself, so every living human being is an end in himself, not the means to the ends or the welfare of others- and, therefore, that man must live for his own sake, neither sacrificing himself to others nor sacrificing others to himself. To live for his own sake means that the achievement of his own happiness is man’s highest moral purpose.”⁴⁴

Rand’s philosophic view and the central role it plays in guiding current economic thinking forms the basic counterpoint to the Buddhist position argued by this thesis. The concentration in economics and morality on individual interest and rational decision-making has eliminated compassion and altruism in the public sphere. Studies of rich individuals show that they are psychologically unimpacted by the widening gulf of inequality.⁴⁵ In fact, social class (as measured by wealth, occupational prestige, and

⁴³ Hassan Abolghasemi et al., “Blood Donor Incentives: A Step Forward or Backward.”

⁴⁴ Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness*, p. 30.

⁴⁵ Shigehiro Oishi et al., “Income Inequality and Happiness.”

education) predicts feelings of compassion towards other people. On average, upper class individuals are less likely to pay attention to others, worse at recognizing others' emotions, and more likely to engage in greedy, unethical behavior, because wealth and abundance give individuals a sense of freedom and independence from others, allowing them to be more self-focused and less caring.⁴⁶

It is true, on the other hand, that societies with higher levels of trust are the happiest and most prosperous, because the ability to trust strangers both increases good will and encourages opportunities for cooperation and exchange.⁴⁷ Overall, a Buddhist model of utility based on shared value is an improvement upon economics' model of utility based on self-interest, because it more accurately measures the sources of happiness and well-being. In the following two sections, the economic and Buddhist models will be discussed in relation to the prior distinction between happiness as a function of hedonic desire (*tanhā*) versus eudaimonic desire (*chandha*), in order to establish the latter's more accurate appraisal of well-being.

3.4 Suffering on the Hedonic Treadmill

In the *Anaṇa Sutta* (AN 4.62), the Buddha taught Anathapindika four types of happiness available to householders partaking of sensuality, including the happiness of: (1) amassing wealth righteously (Skt. *atthi-sukha*), (2) expending wealth meritoriously (Skt. *bhoga-sukha*), (3) owing no debt (Skt. *anaṇa-sukha*), and (4) exercising purity in thought,

⁴⁶ J.E. Stellar et al., "Class and Compassion: Socioeconomic Factors Predict Responses to Suffering," Paul K. Piff et al., "Higher Social Class Predicts Increased Unethical Behavior."

⁴⁷ Paul J. Zak, *The Moral Molecule: The Source of Love and Prosperity*.

speech, and action (Skt. *anavajja-sukha*). While the significance of material development is by no means unimportant, the Buddha attributed far greater significance to the fourth and final happiness, highlighting spiritual development's much greater capacity to improve happiness and well-being.⁴⁸ Likewise, the *Dighajānu Sutta* (AN 8.54) delineates conditions of spiritual welfare (i.e. the accomplishment of faith, virtue, generosity, and wisdom) after the conditions of material welfare (i.e. persistent effort, vigilance, good friendship, and balanced livelihood), in order to underscore their relatively greater significance in promoting happiness in future lives.⁴⁹

In a similar vein, a founder of modern macroeconomics, John Maynard Keynes, predicted that both the “love of money as a possession” and the “social customs and economic practices... which we now maintain at all costs, however distasteful and unjust” could at last be discarded after a century of economic growth had provided us sufficient “means to the enjoyments and realities of life.”⁵⁰ Keynes observed:

“...for the first time since his creation man will be faced with his real, his permanent problem- how to use his freedom from pressing economic cares, how to occupy the leisure, which science and compound interest will have won for him, to live wisely and agreeably and well...[I]t will be those people, who can keep alive, and cultivate into a fuller perfection, the art of life itself and do not sell themselves for the means of life, who will be able to enjoy the abundance when it comes.”⁵¹

Though sustained economic growth has provided the abundance to meet everyone's material needs, the gains of the last century have been unequally distributed and those

⁴⁸ Bhikkhu Thanissaro trans. “Anana Sutta: Debtless” (AN 4.62).

⁴⁹ Thera Nārada trans. “Dighajānu (Vyagghapajja) Sutta: Conditions of Welfare” (AN 8.54).

⁵⁰ John Maynard Keynes, *Essays in Persuasion*, pp. 358-373.

⁵¹ John Maynard Keynes, “Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren,” p. 362.

who enjoy them rarely cultivate the path to spiritual development or the ‘art of living’ referred to by both the Buddha and Keynes.

In contrast, affluent people today are just as likely to fixate on consumption as a way of life, while rich countries continue to gauge progress in terms of growth and the further accumulation of capital. In mistaking the means for the ends, people associate happiness with freedom of choice and pursue it by chasing the objects of their desire. However, as soon as their desire is satisfied, a new desire arises to replace it, in an endless economic cycle of consuming, producing, and proliferating desire.

Economism and its persistent focus on unrestrained growth and development is grounded in the craving (*taṇhā*) and attachment to self-interest, which confuses the hedonic pursuit of happiness (the means) with the eudaimonic pursuit of happiness (the ends). Moreover, rather than creating happiness and well-being, the cyclical production of new desires to replace old expectations will never provide enduring well-being as Bhante Henepola Gunaratana articulates:

“When you try to obtain happiness by pleasing unlimited and insatiable desire by [limited] means...you end up in frustration and losing whatever little relative happiness you have.”⁵²

In Buddhist mythology, there is a class of beings, called hungry ghosts (Skt. *preta*), who live in perpetual dissatisfaction, because their tiny mouths and throats cannot possibly accommodate their unquenchable thirst (*taṇhā*). Though there is enough to eat, they exhaust all their energy in a relentless pursuit to fill their sense of lack, without

⁵² Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, *Buddhist Concept of Happiness*.

understanding that they themselves are the source of their suffering.⁵³ *The Secret*⁵⁴ is a good example of a modern commercial success exploiting the desire, delusion, and selfishness inherent in the hedonic pursuit of happiness. Together, the book and the film grossed \$300 million in four years and spurred a worldwide growth of positive thinking cults who believed a physical force, called the law of attraction, allowed them to receive whatever they desired simply by wishing it.

Yet despite its pervasiveness in everyday life, hedonic desire has no direct bearing on well-being. In an extensive scientific study tracking people's thoughts and feelings throughout the day, people reported feeling desire half of the time they were awake and reported inner conflicts 47% of the time they experienced desire.⁵⁵ Desires frequently inhibit well-being, by conflicting with people's other goals, values, and motivations. Moreover, Keith Berridge's neuroscientific research on desire illustrates that wanting and liking are associated with two different neural systems, and wanting something does not accurately predict if the thing will actually improve subjective well-being.⁵⁶

Since wanting does not reliably improve well-being, current economic measures do not necessarily indicate the proper means to welfare, because utility is measured as a function of desire and wanting, as Alfred Marshall states in the introductory textbook, *Principles of Economics*:

⁵³ Jason Tetsuzen Wirth, "Shikantaza During The Sixth Great Extinction."

⁵⁴ Rhonda Byrne, *The Secret*.

⁵⁵ Wilhelm Hofmann et al., "Everyday Temptations: An Experience Sampling Study of Desire, Conflict, and Self-Control," p. 1329.

⁵⁶ K.C. Berridge, "Food Reward: Brain Substrates of Wanting and Liking."

“Utility is taken to be correlative to Desire or Want. It has been already argued that desires cannot be measured directly, but only indirectly, by the outward phenomena to which they give rise: and that in those cases with which economics is chiefly concerned the measure is found in the price which a person is willing to pay for the fulfillment or satisfaction of his desire.”⁵⁷

The success of business to profit depends upon whether people desire or want products, regardless of their capacity to improve quality of life. Desires central function in determining utility is evident in instances of price gouging, where products are sold at variable prices according to their desirability to certain people at different times.⁵⁸ Since the more you desire, the more you’ll pay, there is a large incentive to spend money and resources on advertising, in an attempt to create in people a false sense of desire or need. In many cases, advertising creates fads and exploits people’s insecurities, because it is often easier to persuade people to buy an inferior product than it is to make a superior one. Although happiness is incessantly associated with products in expensive ad-campaigns, like Coca-Cola’s “Open Happiness” campaign,⁵⁹ research shows that “only 20% of brands have a notable positive impact on our sense of wellbeing and quality of life.”⁶⁰

Historically, today’s dominant consumer culture was initially encouraged as a way of life after World War II, in order to supply sufficient demand for the post-war economy to continue growing its productive capacity. In 1955, Victor Lebow expressed the strategic vision of marketers at that time:

“Our enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfactions, our ego satisfactions, in consumption. The measure of social status, of social acceptance, of prestige, is now to be found in our consumptive patterns. The very

⁵⁷ Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics: An Introductory Volume*, p. 78.

⁵⁸ Constance L. Hays, “Variable-Price Coke Machine Being Tested.”

⁵⁹ <http://www.coca-cola.com/happiness/>

⁶⁰ Havos Media, “Meaningful Brands- Havas Media Launches Global Results.”

meaning and significance of our lives today expressed in consumptive terms. The greater the pressures upon the individual to conform to safe and accepted social standards, the more does he tend to express his aspirations and his individuality in terms of what he wears, drives, eats- his home, his car, his pattern of food serving, his hobbies.”⁶¹

Marketers continue to create desires and expectations linked to social norms in order to more effectively stimulate consumer demand, though it comes at the expense of our spiritual and moral selves. In neurological studies, the link between a person’s mirror neuron system (MNS) and brain valuation system (BVS) can in fact predict how highly they value objects perceived to be desirable by others.⁶² People who are encouraged to evaluate their self-worth in comparison to others are on average less happy. The widespread promotion of this trait by consumerism also severely impinges personal and social well-being, by encouraging competition in place of social cohesion and personal contentment. A study of materialism’s costs shows that “simply referring to people as ‘consumers’ rather than ‘individuals’ causes people to be less generous, accept less responsibility, and view others as competitors rather than allies.”⁶³

In the final analysis, economics’ obsession with growth and people’s obsession with consumption directs our full resources and energy to improving well-being; But in confusing the ends with the means, our fundamental delusion (*moha*) misapprehends the sources of happiness as the satisfaction of desires, placing us on a hedonic treadmill of dissatisfaction and discontent. As Tim Jackson laments, “People are being persuaded to

⁶¹ Victor Lebow, “Price Competition in 1955.”

⁶² M. Lebreton et al., “Your Goal is Mine: Unraveling Mimetic Desires in the Human Brain,” p. 7146.

⁶³ Monika A. Bauer et al., “Cuing Consumerism: Situational Materialism Undermines Personal and Social Well-Being.”

spend money we don't have, on things we don't need, to create impressions that won't last, on people we don't care about.”⁶⁴

Clive Hamilton documents how the confusion of human wants and needs have undermined Britain's well-being, despite the benefits afforded by a half-century of rapid growth and development:

“...61 per cent of Britons believe that they cannot afford to buy everything they really need...more than a quarter of the wealthiest households in Briton believe that they spend nearly all of their money on the basic necessities of life...Britons today feel more materially deprived than their parents and grandparents in the 1950s, despite being three times richer. This sense of deprivation is daily reinforced by the media and popular debate through the language of economics and the ceaseless cultivation of discontent that is the function of the marketing industry.”⁶⁵

As mentioned in section 3.2, the relationship between wealth and well-being changes as absolute and relative income each relate differently to experienced utility and life satisfaction. Although today's British enjoy three times greater absolute earnings and a very high quality of life, they nevertheless feel dissatisfied because the perceived value of their wealth diminishes relative to their growing expectations. A shift in the way they value and frame their affluence explains the discrepancy between income's impact on their happiness before and after their earnings were increased.

The false sense of deprivation which motivates them to continue consuming may also be explained in part by a “self-discrepancy gap,” which “refers to the distance between our actual self and our ideal self.” Those whose desired self does not match their actual self may feel deprived or inadequate, blaming external factors for their

⁶⁴ TED. “Tim Jackson's Economic Reality Check.”

⁶⁵ Clive Hamilton, *Overconsumption in Britain: A Culture of Middle-class Complaint*.

psychological discomfort. When we align our perception with reality, however, we find greater comfort and well-being. Two studies on mindfulness meditation at a weekend meditation workshop⁶⁶ and at an 8-week MBCT course⁶⁷ show that training the mind helps close the self-discrepancy gap and inspire greater well-being.

In Part IV of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Adam Smith warned that true happiness is universally available to beggars and kings, irrespective of wealth or status. Blind to this fact, however, poorer men dedicate themselves to the pursuit of wealth and fame believing that the conveniences afforded to their superiors provide more means to happiness. Yet in confusing the ends with the means, and by comparing their worth to others, people sacrifice health and happiness to the burden of accumulating “mere trinkets of frivolous utility.”⁶⁸ In chapter twenty five of the *Dhammapada*, there is an injunction against the feelings of envy and discriminating judgments which foment greater consumptive desires and dissatisfaction:

“One should not despise what one has received, nor envy the gains of others. The monk who envies the gains of others does not attain to meditative absorption.”⁶⁹

Ultimately, the solution to suffering on the hedonic treadmill is to simply step off. Today, people are increasingly stressed, unhappy, and suffering from poor health,⁷⁰ because the means of life have overtaken the ‘art of life,’ as articulated by the Buddha and Keynes. In

⁶⁶ I. Ivtzan et al., “Mindfulness Meditation and Curiosity: The Contributing Factors to Wellbeing and the Process of Closing the Self-discrepancy Gap.”

⁶⁷ C. Crane et al., “Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy and Self-Discrepancy in Recovered Depressed Patients with a History of Depression and Suicidality.”

⁶⁸ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Part IV.

⁶⁹ Acharya Buddhārakkhita trans. “Bhikkhuvagga: The Monk” (Dhp 365).

⁷⁰ For statistics on stress in America, see: American Psychological Association, “Stress a Major Health Problem in the U.S., Warns APA.”

a 2009 survey, greater stress and poor time-balance were the primary indicators of lower wellbeing among 2,400 affluent Canadians from Greater Victoria. Like the prior study from Britain, people were relatively free from material deprivation (92 out of 100) and yet very dissatisfied by their financial situation (53 out of 100), suggesting that simpler lifestyles would improve well-being, by restoring a sense of balance and contentment to the busy, stressful lives of affluent people who overwork to overcome feelings of financial inadequacy.⁷¹

In response to the personal, social, and environmental harms of further accelerating the pace of modern life, a growing number of individuals are downshifting and moving toward lifestyles of voluntary simplicity. In the last ten years, 25% of British adults aged 30-59 have made long-term life changes, reducing their incomes by 40% on average, in order to balance time and focus on family, health, and personal fulfillment. When “downshiffters” realized salaries failed to satisfy their ever-increasing needs, they sacrificed an excessive pursuit of money and materialism to provide a better quality of life for themselves. As Bertrand Russell wrote “In Praise of Idleness:”

“I want to say, in all seriousness, that a great deal of harm is being done in the modern world by belief in the virtuousness of work, and that the road to happiness and prosperity lies in an organized diminution of work.”⁷²

This rapid emergence of downshiffters in Britain proves GDP and income growth do not define progress to a large segment of society valuing happiness and well-being.⁷³ One of the silver linings to the global economic crisis has been an increased willingness to

⁷¹ Victoria Foundation, “The Happiness Index: A Summary Report.”

⁷² Bertrand Russell, *In Praise of Idleness: And Other Essays*.

⁷³ Clive Hamilton, *Downshifting in Britain: A Sea-change in the Pursuit of Happiness*.

reconsider and reprioritize our economic values. Though widespread unemployment severely diminished well-being, a nearly 10% segment of the American population in fact reported being “very happy” twice as often as the general public, due to enhanced time-balance following the economic slowdown.⁷⁴

The cultivation of the ‘art of living’ which is the cornerstone of spiritual development provides the eudaimonic alternative to the hedonic treadmill. In a study investigating the link between spirituality and materialism, it was found the relationship between self-transcendence and spirituality is opposed to self-enhancement and materialism, such that the pursuit of self-transcendent desires are functionally opposed to self-aggrandizing displays of wealth.⁷⁵ People who identify with spiritual experiences also exhibit less materialistic traits and less willingness to spend money on luxury consumer products. Since self-control was not an important determinant of their behavior, spirituality likely reduces conspicuous consumption by actually mitigating materialistic desires.⁷⁶

The simple lifestyles and practices of Buddhist monastics exemplify how well-being can be enhanced by eliminating excessive desires and limiting one’s consumption, so that requisite needs are adequately met with minimal impacts to oneself, others and the environment.⁷⁷ In the following section, research on compassion and altruism will provide the scientific basis for Buddhism’s alternative pursuit of eudaimonic happiness.

⁷⁴ Tom W. Smith, *Trends in Well-being, 1972-2010*.

⁷⁵ William Kilbourne et al., “A Cross-cultural Examination of the Relationship between Materialism and Individual Values.”

⁷⁶ Tyler F. Stillman et al., “The Material and Immaterial in Conflict: Spirituality Reduces Conspicuous Consumption.”

⁷⁷ Jae-Young Seo, “The Ecological Tradition of Korean Seon Monastery.”

The Buddhist model of utility will be defined as a function of self-transcendent desires directed toward the interests of oneself and others (*chanha*), so that economics is not motivated by the proliferation of selfish desires, but by the production of altruistic intentions.

3.5 Happiness and Altruism

Biology defines altruism as a behavior that costs the agent and benefits the subject.⁷⁸ In the words of neuroeconomists Ernst Fehr and Urs Fischbacher, “strong reciprocity is a combination of altruistic rewarding, which is a predisposition to reward others for cooperative, norm-abiding behaviors, and altruistic punishment, which is a propensity to impose sanctions on others for norm violations.”⁷⁹ Although the origins of cooperation and altruism are still widely studied,⁸⁰ the earliest forms of altruism seem to have evolved in a number of primarily punitive traits that enabled primates to express social selection and expand social networks.⁸¹ Later, the evolution of human sociality and the development of increasingly complex societies extended altruism to more costly contexts, where the growth of interdependent interests expressed important evolutionary advantages.⁸²

⁷⁸ de Quervain, D. J. et al., “The Neural Basis of Altruistic Punishment,” p. 1257.

⁷⁹ E. Fehr and U. Fischbacher. “The Nature of Human Altruism,” p. 785.

⁸⁰ The best summary work is Robert W. Sussman and Robert C. Cloninger, ed. *Origins of Altruism and Cooperation*.

⁸¹ J. Tan and B. Hare, “Bonobos Share with Strangers.”

⁸² Michael Tomasello et al., “Two Key Steps in the Evolution of Human Cooperation: The Interdependence Hypothesis,” p. 5.

Following this same evolutionary rationale, the link between happiness and altruism likewise results from the benefits pro-social behaviors confer to human welfare. In an edited interview, happiness expert Daniel Gilbert said, “If I had to summarize all the scientific literature on the causes of human happiness in one word, that word would be ‘social.’”⁸³ On average, peoples’ moods consistently improve with additional social time up to seven hours a day,⁸⁴ and the correlation between happiness and social support is .71, which is extremely high, considering for instance, that the correlation between smoking and cancer is .37.⁸⁵ The link between happiness and sociality was examined in depth by a study on emotional clustering and contagion, which concluded five major findings: (1) social networks contain clusters of happy and unhappy people; (2) happy and unhappy clusters extend out to three degrees of separation; (3) happy people typically form the center of their social network; (4) happy people are usually friends with other happy people; and (5) a person is 9% more likely to be happy after the addition of a happy friend.⁸⁶

Thanks to the intrinsic connection between happiness and altruism, social connections don’t just make us feel good, they also make us do good. People who feel a greater sense of relatedness are more interested in volunteering, more likely to donate to charity, and generally more engaged in pro-social activities.⁸⁷ Conversely, two studies on happiness and immorality demonstrate that both our personal unhappiness and the quality

⁸³ Gardiner Morse, “The Science behind the Smile: An Interview with Daniel Gilbert.”

⁸⁴ Steve Crabtree, “U.S. Seniors Maintain Happiness Highs With Less Social Time.”

⁸⁵ Shawn Achor, “Positive Intelligence,” p. 102.

⁸⁶ James H. Fowler and Nicholas A. Christakis. “Dynamic Spread of Happiness in a Large Social Network: Longitudinal Analysis Over 20 Years in the Framingham Heart Study,” p. 337.

⁸⁷ Louisa Pavey et al., “Highlighting Relatedness Promotes Prosocial Motives and Behavior.”

of our social relationships can predict criminal or hostile behavior.⁸⁸ Historically, morality began shaping universal forms of altruism when people began emotionally identifying with rules and norms,⁸⁹ which religion later codified into moral systems and precepts. Religion became the predominant institution for building community on the basis of altruism,⁹⁰ and today, religiosity remains one of the best predictors of both happiness and altruism. Ritual performances, communal prayers, and common beliefs all cultivate the instinctual habits of altruism that build trusting relationships and destroy negative, self-serving emotions.

Within the Buddhist tradition, the desire for happiness (*chandha*) does not differentiate between the welfare of oneself and others, such that altruism becomes inherently linked to happiness, as expressed by Śāntideva in the *Bodhisattvacaryā*:



“When happiness is something equally liked,
Both by myself and others,
What’s so special about me
That I strive after happiness for myself alone?”⁹¹

Compassion and loving-kindness form the crucial supports for Buddhists’ parallel cultivation of happiness and altruism. In the *Suttanipata-atthakatha* (SnA 128), compassion (Skt. *karuṇā*) is defined as the wish for all sentient beings to be free from suffering (Skt. *ahita dukkh āpanaya kāmātā*), while loving-kindness (Skt. *maitri*) is defined as the wish to inspire happiness and well-being in others (Skt. *hita sukh ūpanayakāmātā*). Together, compassion and loving-kindness are complementary- the first

⁸⁸ Maxwell Maltz, *Psycho-cybernetics: A New Way to Get More Living out of Life*, p. 96.

⁸⁹ Christopher Boehm, *Moral Origins: The Evolution of Virtue, Altruism, and Shame*.

⁹⁰ Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell. *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*.

⁹¹ Alexander Berzin trans. *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior*, BCA 8.95.

two of four immeasurables (Skt. *brahmavihāra*), developing one's own happiness by desiring the happiness of others.⁹²

This link between individual and collective happiness appears in neuroscientific research, which finds the same areas of the brain implicated in the operation of both empathy and altruism. Whereas the ability to understand others is linked to the activation of the temporo-parietal junction, the development of altruism is likewise linked to the development of gray matter in the temporal and parietal lobes.⁹³ As a result, altruistic individuals typically understand others' intentions and beliefs better. At the same time, if activity in the right temporo-parietal junction (RTPJ) is disrupted, then a person's capacity to make moral judgments by inferring other people's intentions is significantly impaired. People who do not possess an ability to understand others' intentions instead view immoral acts permissibly when they result in positive outcomes,⁹⁴ suggesting that compassion and altruism form a bridge between personal and social well-being by determining one's own conduct on the basis of understanding others.

The dual promotion of compassion and altruism is further evident in neuroscientific research on meditation,⁹⁵ where some of the same types of compassion training programs outlined in section 2.3 are proven to increase helping behavior,⁹⁶

⁹² Pali Text Society. "Karuṇā."

⁹³ Yosuke Morishima et al., "Linking Brain Structure and Activation in Temporoparietal Junction to Explain the Neurobiology of Human Altruism."

⁹⁴ Liane Young, et al. "Disruption of the Right Temporoparietal Junction with Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation Reduces the Role of Beliefs in Moral Judgments."

⁹⁵ For a recent presentation summarizing the current state of research in this area, see: Sinnott-Armstrong, Walter et al., "Personal Cultivation and Moral Psychology."

⁹⁶ S. Leiberg, "Short-Term Compassion Training Increases Prosocial Behavior in a Newly Developed Prosocial Game."

increase charitable giving,⁹⁷ and inspire more altruistic acts.⁹⁸ Compassion's association to happiness is most prominently reported by studies of Buddhist adepts. In one study, Buddhist practitioners with 10,000 to 50,000 hours of mental training were able to generate states of non-referential compassion that produced higher magnitude increases in rapid gamma-band oscillations than ever reported in a non-pathological context. This high-amplitude gamma activity was concentrated in the left prefrontal cortex linked to positive emotions and happiness.⁹⁹

Concerning economic life, compassion and altruism may be practiced by redefining the nature of our wanting as an expression of *chandha*, rather than *taṇhā*. As a discipline, economics studies the allocation of scarce resources based on the interaction of supply and demand, which is itself the management of tension between what we desire and what we produce. As mentioned in the preceding section (3.4), people have many conflicting desires and preferences, some of which are influenced by advertising or market forces; but they also have a choice between which desires and preferences to satisfy. If we can improve the qualities of awareness involved in economic decision-making and direct our behavior to the satisfaction of holistic well-being (*chandha*), then we can transform our consumption into a contemplative exercise which responds to real needs and which builds markets that respect the balance between the needs of others and

⁹⁷ H.Y. Weng et al., "Multi-voxel Pattern Analysis of Brain States after Compassion Training Predicts Charitable Donations."

⁹⁸ A. Lutz et al., "Regulation of the Neural Circuitry of Emotion by Compassion Meditation: Effects of Meditative Expertise."

⁹⁹ Antoine Lutz et al., "Long-term Meditators Self-induce High-amplitude Gamma Synchrony during Mental Practice."

the environment.¹⁰⁰ Within this context, well-being (*chandha*) is not determined by the quantity of our consumption, but by the quality of our relationships.

Unlike its spiritual antecedent, Buddhism doesn't assert like Brahmanism that bad karma can be transferred in economic exchange;¹⁰¹ however, it does posit that exchanging material without a mind of renunciation is poisonous for its ability to create attachments in both householders and monastics.¹⁰² The cultivation of generosity (Skt. *dāna*) is therefore an abiding feature of Buddhist economic practice and now, it is increasingly the focus of positive psychology and happiness economics, since spending money on others creates more happiness than spending on oneself.¹⁰³

In the 2013 book *Happy Money*, Elizabeth Dunn and Michael Norton show that spending money on oneself leads to antisocial behavior, diminishes return value, and does not affect anyone's happiness, whereas spending money on others leads to pro-social behavior, improves return value, and increases the happiness of oneself and others.¹⁰⁴ In another study, the same phenomenon was confirmed among toddlers who felt happier giving benefits than receiving benefits. Giving had a greater effect on their happiness the more children sacrificed in the exchange, suggesting that "experiencing positive emotions when giving to others is a proximate mechanism for human

¹⁰⁰ Daniel Barbezat is a scholar currently pioneering the development of a contemplative economics. For more information, see: Daniel Barbezat, "Wanting: Teaching Economics as Contemplative Inquiry."

¹⁰¹ Gloria Goodwin Raheja, *The Poison in the Gift: Ritual, Prestation, and the Dominant Caste in a North Indian Village*.

¹⁰² Amod J. Lele, "Ethical Revaluation in the Thought of Śāntideva," p. 94.

¹⁰³ Elizabeth W. Dunn et al., "Spending Money on Others Promotes Happiness."

¹⁰⁴ Elizabeth Dunn and Michael Norton, *Happy Money: The Science of Smarter Spending*.

cooperation.”¹⁰⁵ In general, happiness is not impacted by the amount given, but by one’s openness to give. In fact, the world’s largest study on charitable behavior, called the World Giving Index, reports that happiness is a greater predictor of giving money than wealth.¹⁰⁶

Additional research comparing the effects of material and experiential purchases shows that in general, experiential purchases strengthen social bonds and improve happiness using less money over a longer term, compared to material purchases, which satisfy consumers for shorter periods, due to the adverse effects of hedonic adaptation.¹⁰⁷ Whereas pro-social and experiential spending bring people together and share wealth in ways that continuously improve well-being, spending money on possessions generally fails to improve day-to-day happiness once buyers adapt to their new purchases.

Just as generosity’s benefits are dependent upon one’s openness to give, experiential spending’s benefits are contingent on maintaining the same attitude of non-possessiveness. When materialists make experiential purchases for extrinsic reasons, such as to impress others, they are no happier, because they perceive experiences as just more possessions.¹⁰⁸ The link between intrinsic motivations and greater happiness, discussed at length in section 2.2, also appears in studies on charitable giving, which show that donors are happiest and most likely to donate when they give freely to support a cause they care

¹⁰⁵ L.B. Aknin et al., “Giving Leads to Happiness in Young Children.”

¹⁰⁶ Charities Aid Foundation. “World Giving Index 2011: A Global View of Giving Trends.”

¹⁰⁷ Elizabeth W. Dunn et al., “If Money Doesn’t Make You Happy, Then You Probably Aren’t Spending It Right.”

¹⁰⁸ Jia Wei Zhang et al., “Buying Life Experiences for the ‘Right’ Reasons: A Validation of the Motivations for Experiential Buying Scale.”

about, rather than if they give in response to peer pressure or in order to avoid shame.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, volunteers who are intrinsically motivated, to connect socially or to help others, experience substantial health benefits, whereas volunteers who are extrinsically motivated by self-interest receive no health benefit whatsoever.¹¹⁰

Although spending money on others (pro-social spending) and spending money on experiences (experiential spending) are both associated with greater happiness and altruism, consumption must also be mindful in order to efficiently provide well-being. People who are frugal and spend less are happier, because they more carefully select goods that bring lasting satisfaction, whereas people who spend freely make purchases that bring only momentary happiness.¹¹¹ In particular, contemplative practices which systematically promote compassion and altruism also provide opportunities to better understand the inter-relatedness between our consumption and the well-being of ourselves, others, and the environment. In *Ecological Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman argues that indices like Good Guide¹¹² enable us to be mindful consumers, by allowing us to make purchasing decisions based on information of a product's personal, social, and ecological impacts. If we clearly understand the causes and conditions that created a product in its industrial life cycle, then we can also understand the ethical and karmic

¹⁰⁹ Diane Reyniers and Richa Bhalla, "Reluctant Altruism and Peer Pressure in Charitable Giving," C.A. Scott, "Modifying Socially-Conscious Behavior: The Foot-in-the-Door Technique."

¹¹⁰ Sara Konrath et al., "Motives for Volunteering Are Associated With Mortality Risk in Older Adults."

¹¹¹ "BeyondThePurchase.org Finds that Spendthrifts are More Likely to have Materialistic Values; Tightwads are More Likely to Purchase Experiences."

¹¹² Good Guide. <http://www.goodguide.com/>.

consequences of our consumer behavior, while ensuring that our purchases have a positive impact on holistic well-being (*chandha*).¹¹³

In summary, new findings in evolutionary psychology suggest that cooperation and altruism may be motivated by human's intrinsic moral nature, rather than an exclusive concern with mutual self-interest. For instance, there is evidence that pro-social activities like volunteering are intrinsically rewarding¹¹⁴ and there is evidence that individuals who regulate compassion undermine self-interest by sacrificing the integrity of their moral self-concept.¹¹⁵ Scientific models of human behavior, such as economics' utility maximization model, therefore need to be updated to include pro-social considerations in human behavior and decision-making. Broadening our definition of utility beyond self-interest would also help incorporate morality and ethics into new economic models, while enhancing economics' capacity to improve welfare, since pro-sociality is the single strongest determinant of health and happiness.

Finally, the desire which motivates economic exchange also determines its capacity to improve welfare. If exchange is motivated by a self-centered desire for personal gain (*tanhā*), materials of equal value are shared and there is no additional benefit to well-being; whereas if exchanges are motivated by other-regarding desires (*chandha*) aided by compassion and altruism, the transaction produces psychological benefits that create additional value beyond the value of goods exchanged. Whereas

¹¹³ Daniel Goleman, *Ecological Intelligence: How Knowing the Hidden Impacts of What We Buy Can Change Everything*.

¹¹⁴ Stephan Meier and Alois Stutzer, "Is Volunteering Rewarding in Itself?"

¹¹⁵ C. Daryl Cameron and B. Keith Payne, "The Cost of Callousness: Regulating Compassion Influences the Moral Self-Concept."

Buddhism claims the spiritual benefits of material exchanges are in part determined by the degree they cultivate generosity (*dāna*) and non-attachment, science shows that generous giving produces emotional rewards that both create added value and motivate costly pro-social behavior. In addition, experiential spending and mindful consumption also provide essential practices that strengthen one's relationships and direct one's consumption to the satisfaction of holistic wellbeing.

3.6 Conclusion

The argument of this chapter is somewhat tenuous, assuming that the Buddhist concept of happiness can be described in economic terms using empirical research on altruism and compassion. Generally, the use of empirical research to describe Buddhism's views on happiness is part of the post-Enlightenment project to incorporate Buddhist ethics into natural accounts accessible to modern science. Dale Wright advances this position, arguing that good karma (*punya*) positively orients moral actors, guaranteeing them internal rewards of happiness (*eudaimonia*); but without recourse to rebirth, external rewards become contingent upon virtue's propensity to elicit reciprocity.¹¹⁶ Likewise, the standpoint of Fehr and Fischbacher cited at the beginning of section 3.5 also upholds a view of altruism conditioned purely by reciprocity. According to this view, "if strong reciprocators believe that no one else will cooperate, they will also not cooperate... [but since] a minority of strong reciprocators suffices to discipline a majority of selfish individuals when direct punishment is possible,"¹¹⁷ Fehr and Fischbacher naturally focus

¹¹⁶ Dale S. Wright, "Critical Questions towards a Naturalized Concept of Karma in Buddhism."

¹¹⁷ E. Fehr and U. Fischbacher. "The Nature of Human Altruism," p. 787.

on reorganizing social institutions to optimally promote altruism and punish selfish behavior.

The problem is that a view of altruism based solely on its consequences discredits the psychological and spiritual dimensions which dictate its value and function within Buddhism. Whereas biological accounts claim altruism is a behavior which costs agents and benefits subjects, Buddhism claims that pure altruism benefits both agents and subjects, because any material ‘loss’ inspires a greater spiritual (karmic) gain. In addition, consequentialist accounts of altruism are problematic from a Buddhist perspective, because they ignore the intentions of the agents to wish well-being upon others to the extent that altruistic punishments can be regularly motivated by negative emotions like anger and hatred,¹¹⁸ which Buddhists consider primal sources of suffering. In one study, Buddhist meditators more willingly accepted unfair economic transactions, because they made less emotional discriminations and instead accepted outcomes on a more rational basis.¹¹⁹ In this case, Buddhists who did not emotionally identify with unfair economic outcomes may seem complicit in promoting injustice, but it may also be argued that the current scientific account of altruism discounts Buddhism’s own understanding of altruistic reward and punishment.

More generally, the maximization model of rationality poses a fundamental problem to the engagement of Buddhism and happiness economics. The economics of

¹¹⁸ For a critique of Fehr’s research on altruism, see: Mark S. Peacock, “The Conceptual Construction of Altruism: Ernst Fehr’s Experimental Approach to Human Conduct.”

¹¹⁹ Kirk Ulrich et al., “Interoception Drives Increased Rational Decision-making in Meditators Playing the Ultimatum Game.”

happiness is often justified using utilitarianism's greatest happiness principle, which states that an act is morally right if it achieves the greatest happiness for the greatest number. As mentioned in section 1.6, it is questionable to what degree Buddhism can judge the merits of happiness economics on utilitarian grounds, since it is highly debatable whether Buddhist ethics can be validated by principles of Western consequentialism.¹²⁰

As mentioned in section 2.2, the Buddhist concept of happiness (*sukha*) is intrinsically pursued for its own sake, by responding to suffering in skillful ways; it is not pursued directly by promoting external goods outside their relationship to internal goods. When people seek happiness, they grasp suffering instead, because objectifying, externalizing, and conditioning happiness all arise from *taṇhā*. In the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (BCA) and *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (ŚS) for instance, Śāntideva negates the material value of objects and revalues them purely in terms of their contribution to one's advancement along the bodhisattva path. He also discourages conventional aims to secure, accumulate, and maintain possessions on the grounds that possessions are themselves regarded as dangerous and harmful, due to their propensity to create attachments.¹²¹ Scientific research likewise confirms that pursuing happiness directly is self-defeating, because the

¹²⁰ For the positive case, see: Charles Goodman, *Consequences of Compassion: An Interpretation and Defense of Buddhist Ethics*. For a critique, see: Damien Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*.

¹²¹ Amod J. Lele, "Ethical Revaluation in the Thought of Śāntideva," p. 136.

more one fixates on happiness, the more likely they are setting themselves up for disappointment and dissatisfaction.¹²²

This chapter has argued that the maximally happy person is the maximally virtuous person engaged in purely altruistic relationships with others. It is important to note, however, that happiness and virtue (*eudaimonia*) are maximized according to Buddhism's unique dispensation on the perfection of *sukha* and *sīla*. External goods are not intrinsically valued, but valued in terms of their contribution to happiness and virtue, such that altruism is not maximized by producing greater and greater instances of altruism, but by acting altruistically in as many instances as appropriate. The consequence (altruism) is therefore justified in its contribution to the perfection of happiness and virtue and not in its own right.



¹²² Iris B. Mauss et al., "Can Seeking Happiness Make People Unhappy? Paradoxical Effects of Valuing Happiness."

Chapter 4 A Buddhist Sociology of Happiness

4.1 Gross National Happiness

In its effort to present itself as objective, political science has subordinated itself to economic science, by discrediting normative and ethical values as unscientific, and by placing supreme value upon the expression of our preferences. This is a problem because preferences are poor indicators of well-being and “can ultimately be reduced to emotional responses conditioned by the individual’s total life experience.”¹ By substituting normative values for an individual’s emotional responses to life, today’s ‘objective, value-free’ political science actually imposes its own value- namely that our common interest is served by satisfying a collection of individual desires isolated from one another. Considering the dominance of economic institutions in public life, one could argue that political liberalism no longer exists and a new vision is urgently required to redefine politics for the common good.²

Though politics has largely become a continuation of economics by other means, wealth is a bad proxy for welfare. GDP is increasingly viewed as a limited measure of societal progress, because it does not distinguish when economic activities have a positive or negative impact on well-being. It neither accounts the hidden costs of

¹ David Easton, *The Political System*, p. 221.

² Henry S. Kariel, *Beyond Liberalism, Where Relations Grow*, Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *Knowledge and Politics*, Robert Paul Wolfe, *The Poverty of Liberalism*.

economic development, nor appreciates intangible assets of well-being, such as natural and social capital. The architect of GDP, Simon Kuznets, said in his very first report to the US Congress in 1934, "...the welfare of a nation can, therefore, scarcely be inferred from a measure of national income..."³ This warning was repeated by Robert F. Kennedy in 1968, who said "[GDP] measures everything in short except that which makes life worthwhile."⁴

In light of the divergence between continued economic growth and well-being, an international effort is attempting to shift the measurement of progress away from GDP and toward national well-being. Recently, societies have begun to develop alternative indicators that redefine progress by measuring both well-being's objective and subjective aspects.⁵ Since governments manage what they measure, happiness measures provide a universal framework for calculating worthwhile trade-offs and determining policy priorities in response to communities' needs. It is believed the more quantitative and qualitative measurements effectively complement each other, the more societies can both value what counts and count what's valued, so that positive social outcomes can reach those in need and relevant social concerns can be better addressed.

Both Adam Smith⁶ and Thomas Jefferson⁷ exclaimed that the sole purpose of government was the promotion of society's happiness. Currently, happiness is a policy objective informed by a number of indices broadly measuring well-being in societies

³ Simon Kuznets, "National Income, 1929-1932."

⁴ Robert F. Kennedy Address, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, March 18, 1968.

⁵ In preparation for the global launch of gross national happiness, the UN commissioned this seminal report on global well-being: John Helliwell et al., ed. "The World Happiness Report."

⁶ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Part IV.

⁷ Thomas Jefferson to Thaddeus Kosciusko, ME 12:369

around the world.⁸ Starting in 1972, the Kingdom of Bhutan was the first country to measure progress according to Gross National Happiness, instead of Gross Domestic Product. In article 9.2, Bhutan's constitution declares that, "The State shall strive to promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of Gross National Happiness."⁹

In order to fulfill this edict, the Center for Bhutan Studies formulated a scientific survey that holistically defined eight domains of happiness, including: physical, mental and spiritual health, time-balance, social and community vitality, cultural vitality, education, living standards, good governance, and ecological vitality.¹⁰ The survey data mapped Bhutan's well-being onto a metric that allowed economic policy to balance material and spiritual needs according to the country's Buddhist values.¹¹ In this way, Bhutan is successfully negotiating the problems of Western development as recommended in section 1.2, by empowering the country's strong cultural and spiritual values to construct an alternative that eliminates existing political and economic distortions.

Gross National Happiness is an attractive political form emerging from the influence of Buddhism on Bhutan's national identity. Its legitimacy is largely predicated on a Buddhist worldview, which aims to serve the needs of all sentient beings by

⁸ See, for example, the World Database of Happiness, NEF's Happy Planet Index, the OECD's Better Life Index, the UK's Well-being Index, China's Happiness Index, Greater Victoria's Happiness Index, Australia's Unity Wellbeing Index, Community Indicators Victoria, Somerville's Happiness Survey, and the Gallup-Healthways Wellbeing Index.

⁹ The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan. Article 9.2, 18.

¹⁰ Alejandro Adler Braun, *Gross National Happiness in Bhutan: A Living Example of an Alternative Approach to Progress*.

¹¹ For a glimpse of Buddhism's impact on GNH in Bhutan, see: Tashi Wangmo and John Valk. "Under the Influence of Buddhism: The Psychological Well-being Indicators of GNH."

pursuing universal happiness. At the closing of his 2008 coronation, Bhutan's king declared that his goal was to "promote the greater wellbeing and happiness of all people in this world – of all sentient beings."¹² Nearly the same vision was declared by the renowned Buddhist king, Aśoka, whose inscription in *Rock Edict VI* states:

"The welfare of the whole world is considered by me my duty. Whatever effort I make is for this. What? That I may discharge my debt to living beings. I will cause them to be happy."¹³

In the same manner as this thesis conceives happiness in line with Buddhist teachings, Bhutan's Prime Minister Jigmi Thinley likewise distinguishes the holistic desire for happiness (*chandha*) from the desire for pleasure (*tanhā*), while associating the happiness of GNH with eudaimonic pursuits like 'serving others' and 'realizing innate wisdom':

"We have now clearly distinguished the 'happiness' in GNH from the fleeting, pleasurable 'feel good' moods so often associated with that term. We know that true abiding happiness cannot exist while others suffer, and comes only from serving others, living in harmony with nature, and realizing our innate wisdom and the true and brilliant nature of our own mind."¹⁴

In order to examine whether Gross National Happiness is a viable political framework translating Buddhist values into a model for human development, section 4.2 will introduce several institutional models promoting happiness in society, then sections 4.3-4.6 will present a case study of Gross National Happiness at an institute of higher Buddhist education.

¹² Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the United Nations in New York. "Coronation Address 2008: Coronation Address of His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck."

¹³ Ananda W.P. Guruge, *Asoka, the Righteous: A Definitive Biography*, p. 560.

¹⁴ Jigmi Y. Thinley, "Educating for Gross National Happiness."

4.2 Institutionalizing Happiness

There are several ways in which Buddhism contributes to society's pursuit of happiness. The most conventional way to promote happiness is to first alleviate suffering by treating the enormous burden of mental illness. Before positive psychology's official inception in 1998, psychology ignored happiness as a subject of study and focused instead on classifying and characterizing mental illness.¹⁵ Currently, mental illness is increasing and depression is projected to be the biggest health burden on society in 2030.¹⁶ Yet, most countries allocate less than 1% of their total health budget to mental health¹⁷— a deficit exacerbated by the economic crisis, which prompted budget cuts to reduce mental health services when demand for those services increased substantially.¹⁸

Buddhist meditation and psychotherapy offer important transformative possibilities to Western societies. As Francisco Varela wrote, "Psychoanalysis is particularly important because it is the only Western tradition centrally concerned with a pragmatics of human transformation."¹⁹ Generally, current research suggests mindfulness is successful at treating mental illness and improving quality of life. It has been used in dialectical behavior therapy (DBT),²⁰ acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT),²¹

¹⁵ American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-IV-TR*.

¹⁶ *The Global Burden of Disease: 2004 Update*, p. 51.

¹⁷ S. Saxena et al., "Budget and Financing of Mental Health Services: Baseline Information on 89 countries from WHO's Project Atlas."

¹⁸ "State Mental Health Cuts: The Continuing Crisis."

¹⁹ Francisco J. Varela, *Ethical Know-How: Action, Wisdom, and Cognition*, p. 26.

²⁰ M.M. Linehan, *Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder*.

²¹ S.C. Hayes et al., *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, an Experiential Approach to Behavior Change*.

substance abuse treatment and relapse prevention,²² mindfulness based cognitive therapy (MBCT),²³ and mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR).²⁴ However, contemplative psychotherapies are considered a form of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), unfunded and unsupported by the national health care system, because there are too many instances where insufficient evidence, inconsistent findings, and numerous biases constrain our current knowledge and ability to implement meditation programs universally.²⁵

Nonetheless, programs are spreading throughout the private sector, as companies and organizations create their own initiatives to foster health and happiness in the workplace.²⁶ Historically, the link between happiness and productivity has been underestimated.²⁷ A meta-analysis of 225 academic studies found that life satisfaction was causally linked to successful business outcomes, such that happy employees exhibit 31% higher productivity, 37% higher sales, and three times more creativity.²⁸ There are now survey tools for corporations to measure employee well-being,²⁹ as well as a variety of meditation programs that can serve the business community.³⁰ According to Aon

²² G.A. Marlatt, *Mindfulness for Addiction Problems*, G.A. Marlatt, *Relapse Prevention*. (2nd ed.).

²³ Z.V. Segal et al., *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression: A New Approach to Preventing Relapse*.

²⁴ J. Kabat-Zinn, *Coming to Our Senses*, J. Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*.

²⁵ Two research reviews are: A. Chiesa and A. Serretti, "A Systematic Review of Neurobiological and Clinical Features of Mindfulness Meditations," *Effective Health Care Program*. "Meditation Programs for Stress and Well-being."

²⁶ Mason Fries, "Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction for the Changing Work Environment."

²⁷ Cynthia D. Fisher, "Happiness at Work."

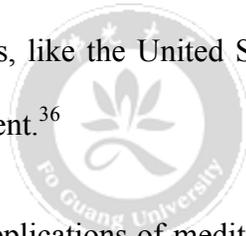
²⁸ Shawn Achor, "Positive Intelligence."

²⁹ The New Economics Foundation's "Well-being@Work" survey is a representative example. For more information, see: <http://www.well-beingatwork.net/>

³⁰ The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society is an industry leader in corporate meditation training. For more information, see: <http://www.contemplativemind.org/>

Hewitt, 25% of large US employers have created ‘stress reduction’ initiatives aimed at increasing productivity and improving employee’s decision making and listening skills.³¹ Google, Apple, IBM, PWC, KPMG, General Mills, and eBay are among the companies offering mindfulness programs today.³²

On the whole, the number of average Americans practicing meditation in the last year increased from 7.6% (15+ million) to 9.4% (20+ million) from 2002 to 2007,³³ indicating a substantial growth in meditation’s popularity. As the scientific community becomes increasingly aware of its essential contribution to well-being, meditation may become mainstream practice, as important to health and happiness as diet and exercise. Since its secularization, mindfulness-based training programs have begun to enjoy broad advocacy in prominent institutions, like the United States Congress,³⁴ the United States Marines,³⁵ and the British Parliament.³⁶



One of the most notable applications of meditation and mindfulness has occurred in schools, where there has been an outstanding need for both the treatment of mental illness and the development of a more holistic approach to education. Currently, contemplative practices offer greater options for treating the alarming levels of mental illness in higher education. For example, among 129 colleges in the United States, slightly more than 50% of students felt “overwhelming anxiety” within the past 12

³¹ David Gelles, “The Mind Business.”

³² YouTube, “Mindfulness in Schools: Richard Burnett at TEDxWhitechapel.”

³³ P.M. Barnes et al., “Complementary and Alternative Medicine Use among Adults and Children: United States, 2007.”

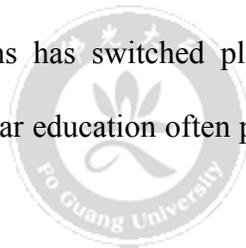
³⁴ Tim Ryan, *A Mindful Nation: How a Simple Practice Can Help Us Reduce Stress, Improve Performance, and Recapture the American Spirit*.

³⁵ Patrick Hruby, “Marines Expanding Use of Meditation Training.”

³⁶ House of Commons Debate. December 4, 2012, c840-848.

months, 30% report having felt “so depressed that it was difficult to function,” and 6.4% have “seriously considered suicide” within the last 12 months.³⁷ Meanwhile, a study of college counselors found 91% of counselors see an increase in serious psychological disorders in students and reports 44% of all students in counseling have serious psychological disorders; while, at the same time, 40% of students would not seek help from a mental health professional for a serious problem.³⁸

In addition to treating mental illness, contemplative education also inculcates values which are the basis of *eudaimonia*. In the late 1960s, more than 80% of college freshmen believed that developing a meaningful philosophy of life was crucial and very important to their life as compared to being very well off financially. Since then, the importance of those two concerns has switched places among the newer cohorts of freshmen.³⁹ Though modern, secular education often presents itself as value-free, Charles Glenn writes:



“Formal education...presents pictures or maps of reality that reflect, unavoidably, particular choices about what is certain and what in question, what is significant and what unworthy of notice. No aspect of schooling can be truly neutral.”⁴⁰

Overall, the greatest inadequacy of modern, secular education may be its narrow focus on cognitive performance and its neglect of multiple intelligences. In *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity and the Hidden Power of Character*, Paul Tough argues that economists, neuroscientists, and psychologists are discovering that character strengths are at least, if

³⁷ American College Health Association, *American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment II: Reference Group Executive Summary Spring 2011*.

³⁸ Robert P. Gallagher. *National Survey of Counseling Center Directors*.

³⁹ J.H. Pryor et al., *The American Freshman: Forty Year Trends*, p. 32.

⁴⁰ Charles Leslie Glenn, *The Myth of the Common School*.

not more important to children's success than cognitive skills and IQ.⁴¹ Inspired by Daniel Goleman's seminal work on *Emotional Intelligence*,⁴² research has also identified the constituents of social and emotional learning (SEL), defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) as:

- Self-management: Managing emotions and behaviors to achieve one's goals
- Self-awareness: Recognizing one's emotions and values as well as one's strengths and challenges
- Social awareness: Showing understanding and empathy for others
- Relationship skills: Forming positive relationships, working in teams, and dealing effectively with conflict; and
- Responsible decision making: Making ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behavior⁴³

More recently, Daniel Goleman's newest work integrates social and emotional intelligence with ecological intelligence, according to five vital practices:

- Developing empathy for all forms of life
- Embracing sustainability as a community practice
- Making the invisible visible
- Anticipating unintended consequences; and
- Understanding how nature sustains life⁴⁴

In many of the ways already outlined, meditation is a technique which uniquely cultivates social, emotional, and ecological intelligence as a set of integrated capacities. In Bhutan,

⁴¹ Paul Tough, Paul. *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity and the Hidden Power of Character*.

⁴² Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: 10th Anniversary Edition; Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*.

⁴³ Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. "What is SEL?"

⁴⁴ Daniel Goleman et al., *Ecoliterate: How Educators Are Cultivating Emotional, Social and Ecological Intelligence*.

meditation training is required as part of the Green School initiative, which compliments cognitive development with social, emotional, and ecological learning programs. In a recent interview, Jigme Y. Thinley explained that Bhutan's education based on Gross National Happiness differs from industrial education systems by producing graduates "with human values, that give importance to relationships, that are eco-literate, contemplative, analytical," and which judge success in terms of happiness found for oneself and given to others.⁴⁵

Meditation in education has also spread outside Buddhist environments. In 1890, William James stated:

"...the faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgement, character, and will. No one is 'compos sui' if he have it not. An education which should improve this faculty would be the education par excellence. But it is easier to define this ideal than to give practical directions for bringing it about."⁴⁶

Thanks to the recent development of secular meditation, Western society now enjoys access to traditional Buddhist practices which give 'practical directions' for cultivating mindfulness in education. There are many ongoing efforts to enhance well-being through the development of contemplative pedagogy⁴⁷ and the application of mindfulness in schools.⁴⁸ For instance, cognitively-based compassion training programs are being implemented in elementary school curricula to teach mindfulness to children, while aiding the development of their social-emotional and moral intelligence.⁴⁹ A mindfulness

⁴⁵ Silver Donald Cameron. "Speaking with the Prime Minister."

⁴⁶ William James, *The Principles of Psychology, Volume 1*.

⁴⁷ Daniel Barbezat and Allison Pingree, "Contemplative Pedagogy: The Special Role of Teaching and Learning Centers."

⁴⁸ See: <http://www.mindfulschools.org/>, <http://mindfulnessinschools.org/>, <http://www.projecthappiness.org/>

⁴⁹ Brooke Dodson-Lavelle, "Training Kids for Kindness."

course has also been taught to more than 30,000 children as part of the Mindful Schools curriculum. In the film *Room to Breathe*, the curriculum's impact was documented on seventh graders and it was found that “80 percent calmed down more easily when upset, 58 percent focused better in class, 40 percent used it to avoid arguments or fights and 34 percent said it raised their grades.”⁵⁰

As noted, there are a wide variety of social institutions affected by the global expansion of Gross National Happiness and the secular, scientific application of Buddhist practices. Yet despite the unprecedented impact of Buddhism's secularization and the rapid development of our scientific understanding of Buddhist practice, it is alarming there are still no scientific studies on happiness and the effects of traditional forms of Buddhism. Now that this thesis has purportedly outlined the relationship between Buddhist orthodoxy and the current science of happiness, the rest of this chapter will provide practical evidence of happiness and Buddhism as a lived philosophy and spiritual tradition.

4.3 Case Study: Happiness at Fo Guang University

4.3.1. Survey Development

The survey used in the following case study is called the Fo Guang University Happiness Initiative (FGU HI) survey. The FGU HI survey is a Chinese translation of the Happiness Initiative Gross National Happiness (HI GNH) survey, containing 123 total questions on

⁵⁰ “Room to Breathe Q & A.”

happiness and well-being. Typical measurements of reported subjective well-being are based on answering a single question (i.e. General Social Survey, World Values Survey, etc...) or a multiple-item survey (i.e. Satisfaction with Life Scale), effectively approximating an individual's global happiness, but lacking a more nuanced understanding of happiness. For this reason, the HI GNH survey was used as a more adequate and holistic way to measure happiness using a multidimensional approach that measures satisfaction and advancement across ten domains: psychological well-being, physical health, time balance, community vitality, education and learning, cultural vitality, environmental quality, governance, material well-being, and workplace experience.

The HI GNH survey is a reiteration of Michael Pennock's second generation Gross National Happiness survey utilized in Victoria, British Columbia. To develop the survey, the Happiness Initiative⁵¹ partnered with the Personality and Well-Being Lab at San Francisco State University.⁵² An hour-long draft survey was compiled using questions from the following existing psychological surveys about well-being and the individual domains of happiness:

- The Gross National Happiness Abridged Survey
- Detroit Area Survey 2001
- General Social Survey 2002
- The World Health Organization Quality of Life Survey
- Centre for Economic Performance Recommendations for Measuring Subjective Well-Being

⁵¹ <http://www.happycounts.org/>

⁵² <https://www.sites.google.com/site/howelhappinsslabs/home>

- The European Social Survey
- University of Michigan and ABC News/Money Magazine Consumer Confidence Survey
- Diener's Flourishing Scale
- Kasser's Time/Material Balance Scale
- Dolan, Layard, and Metcalfe's Domain Satisfaction Questions
- Howell's Experiential Buying Tendency Scale

After the initial survey was tested through voluntary participation, questions were selected which captured the most information about respondents' overall well-being, exhibited the least redundancy with each other, and appropriately related to their corresponding domain. The selection process was repeated until the survey had been reduced to the target length, requiring most people 15 minutes to complete. For final validation, a random, demographically representative sample of 500 Americans was commissioned, and the average score from that sample was set to 50 for each domain.

The survey was then translated into Mandarin Chinese, after which point Fo Guang University's President, Chaur-shin Yung, agreed to use the tools and resources developed by The Happiness Initiative to measure happiness and well-being at Fo Guang University. A local initiative, called Happiness@FGU, was created on November 30, 2011⁵³ to spread awareness of the survey via a campus-wide campaign employing the use of flyers, posters, t-shirts, stickers, videos, public announcements, email, and an

⁵³ See Figure 7

organizational website.⁵⁴ The FGU HI survey was finally electronically administered to students during the 2012 spring and fall semesters.

4.3.2. Population Background

Fo Guang University⁵⁵ was chosen as an ideal site to conduct a study of Buddhism's effects on happiness, because it is a secular university in Taiwan, which offers an education in traditional Buddhist values and practices. Founded by Venerable Master Hsing-Yun, the university "strives to develop the intellectual, moral and spiritual capabilities of tomorrow's Buddhist leaders," while focusing on "the intellectual and moral dimensions in the confidence that such training will inevitably create the proper conditions for spiritual maturation as well."⁵⁶ The university is divided into fifteen departments across four colleges, including the College of Humanities, Social Sciences and Management, Technology, and Buddhist Studies.

In total, this study targets the following four populations to analyze data on happiness based on how prominently Buddhism structures one's life and daily practice:

1. FGU members of the monastic community at the College of Buddhist Studies, hereafter called "monastics"
2. FGU members of the non-monastic community at the College of Buddhist Studies, hereafter called "Buddhist scholars"
3. FGU members of the non-monastic community not at the College of Buddhist Studies, hereafter called "non-Buddhists"

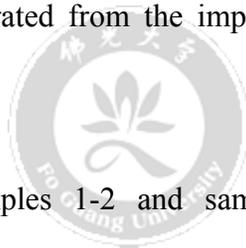
⁵⁴ <http://buddhismandhappiness.com/>

⁵⁵ <http://www.fgu.edu.tw/>

⁵⁶ Stuart Chandler, *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth: The Foguang Buddhist Perspective on Modernization and Globalization*, p. 135.

4. Non-FGU members from the University of Michigan, hereafter called “University of Michigan”

The first three samples live at Fo Guang University and represent a homogenous population sharing the same environment and comparable demographics. As members of the *sangha*, the first group of monastics embodies the greatest commitment to Buddhism, whereas the second group of Buddhist scholars embodies a more moderate commitment to study Buddhist doctrine and cultivate Buddhist discipline as required by the College of Buddhist Studies. Since the third sample of Fo Guang University students and the fourth sample of American students from the University of Michigan come from different cultural backgrounds and share no commitment to Buddhism, the potential impact of contextual variables can be separated from the impact of Buddhism on happiness, as analyzed in the first two samples.



Differences between samples 1-2 and samples 3-4 explain the impact of Buddhism on happiness by studying the effects of one’s participation or non-participation in the unique curriculum at the College of Buddhist Studies.⁵⁷ At the time of this study, the College of Buddhist Studies has been operating the last six years, beginning several years after Fo Guang University initially enrolled students in 2002. The following table presents the total number of enrolled students, divided between males and females at the College of Buddhist Studies (CBS) and Fo Guang University (FGU):

⁵⁷ <http://buddhist.fguweb.fgu.edu.tw/front/bin/home.phtml>

Table 1

POPULATION	B.A. (CBS)		M.A. (CBS)		Ph.D. (CBS)		Total (FGU)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Spring 2011	32	81	10	33	0	0	1520	1513
Fall 2012	35	72	13	41	0	4	1674	1731

Unlike FGU's other students (sample 3), monastics and lay students (samples 1-2) at the College of Buddhist Studies all receive the Buddhist Studies Scholarship,⁵⁸ which subsidizes the full cost of their tuition, living expenses, and meals. Also unlike FGU's other students, monastic and lay students at the College of Buddhist Studies follow a unique curriculum combining both an academic and practicum component that integrates their cognitive and social-emotional learning needs. While students are required to complete academic courses teaching them to critically evaluate and produce Buddhist scholarship, they are also required to participate in the college's semi-monastic community life and complete several contemplative courses and retreats which teach them to cultivate Buddhist values and practices in daily life.

Since the education is divided into academic and practicum components, student assessments are likewise divided between students' performance in the classroom and the degree to which students participate in community life and contemplative training exercises. If students do not fulfill all academic and practicum requirements, their total assessment will suffer, and in many cases where students fail to meet practicum requirements, they will incur punishments and fines enforced to keep students disciplined. Although all students are assessed according to the same academic requirements, male

⁵⁸ <http://buddhist.fguweb.fgu.edu.tw/front/bin/ptlist.phtml?Category=27>

and female students are assessed according to different practicum requirements. Since dorm life is segregated into separate male and female dormitories, the practicum requirements are separately determined by the resident monastic and student leaders who dictate the living requirements of their male or female communities. The practicum at the College of Buddhist Studies will now be examined in detail in an effort to provide specific information on the key factors responsible for Buddhism’s effects on happiness among Buddhist scholars and monastics.

4.3.3. Background of Key Variables Affecting Buddhist Scholars and Monastics

For eighteen weeks, the semester schedule follows the same routine, while school is in session, Monday through Friday:



Table 2

06:30	Wake-up
06:45-07:10	Morning Service
07:10 (7:15 women)	Breakfast
08:10-09:00	Class (1)
09:10-10:00	Class (2)
10:20-11:10	Class (3)
11:20-12:10	Class (4)
12:10	Lunch
13:10-14:00	Class (5)
14:10-15:00	Class (6)
15:20-16:10	Class (7)
16:20-17:10	Class (8)
17:20-18:10	Class (9)
18:10	Medicine Meal (Dinner)
21:30-22:00	Evening Service (excluding Fridays)
22:30 (22:15 women)	Lights out

In total, there are five daily periods of contemplation observed by all students, consisting of breakfast, lunch, medicine meal (dinner), and both morning and evening service. In

order to respect the sanctity of their living environment and to promote their spiritual practice, students are forbidden from keeping alcohol, cigarettes, and meat in the dormitory. Students are also required to share responsibility for cooking and serving communal vegetarian meals, which are observed in silence and preceded by a communal recitation of the dedication of merit. The following table shows how many times men and women are each required to cook and serve meals:

Table 3

	Weekday cooking (per week)	Weekday meal serving (per week)	Weekend cooking and meal serving (per semester)
MEN			
4th year B.A.	1	1	NA
3rd year B.A.	2	2	NA
2nd year B.A.	2	2	NA
1st year B.A.	2	2	NA
2nd year M.A.	1	1	NA
1st year M.A.	2	2	NA
Ph.D.	0	0	NA
WOMEN			
4 th year B.A.	1	0	5
3 rd year B.A.	1	1	4
2 nd year B.A.	1	1	3
1 st year B.A.	1	1	6
2 nd year M.A.	1	0	3
1 st year M.A.	1	1	5
Ph.D.	0	0	0

As another requirement of dorm life, students must also complete chore assignments. In the male dormitory, the student body is divided into five groups supervised by a group leader and an assistant leader. Each student is responsible for completing one of five chores, which rotate on a weekly basis so that all groups share the same amount of responsibility. During any given week, a male student may be responsible for either: (1)

preparing the shrine, (2) patrolling the building, (3) cleaning public areas, (4) cleaning the bathroom or shower and wash rooms, or (5) cleaning the kitchen or dining hall. Every Sunday evening, male students are also required to attend community meetings where needs are addressed by the resident monastic and student leadership.

By contrast, in the female dormitory, all students are required each semester to: (1) clean the classroom once a week or clean the study room twice a week (excluding 4th year B.A. and Ph.D. students), (2) clean the living areas every day for 2 or 3 weeks, (3) clean the kitchen and dining hall once (excluding Ph.D. students), (4) prepare the shrine every day for one week (excluding 2nd year M.A. and Ph.D. students), and (5) patrol the building every day for one week (excluding Ph.D. students).

All students are required to practice Buddhist discipline by participating in a daily twenty minute morning service of sitting meditation and a daily thirty minute evening service of chanting Chinese Buddhist scripture. The following table shows how many times men and women are each required to attend morning and evening services:

Table 4

MEN	Morning Service (per semester)	Evening Service (per semester)
4th year B.A.	80	Optional
1 st – 3 rd year B.A.	120 total	
2nd year M.A.	80	Optional
1st year M.A.	120 total	
Ph.D.	80	Optional
WOMEN		
B.A.	180 total	
2 nd year M.A.	90	Optional
1 st year M.A.	180 total	

Ph.D.	90	Optional
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In addition to the five daily contemplations, there are week-long Chan meditation retreats and Pure Land chanting retreats conducted once per semester at Fo Guang Shan in Kaohsiung. Prior to graduation, M.A. students are required to attend one Chan retreat and one Pure Land retreat, while B.A. students are required to attend two Chan retreats and two Pure Land retreats.

4.3.4. Data Analysis

Now that the unique curriculum at the College of Buddhist Studies has been examined in detail, it should be clear how the Buddhist monastic and lay student life of survey samples 1-2 differs from the non-Buddhist student life of survey samples 3-4. As mentioned, the four sample populations analyzed by this study were divided to distinguish the level of one's commitment to Buddhism, as a means to isolate engagement with Buddhism as a single variable impacting happiness and well-being. By isolating the effect of Buddhism as a variable of happiness, this data analysis will discern the impact of Buddhist values and cultivation on happiness, as well as report findings aimed at understanding measures of happiness and improving quality of life from a Buddhist perspective. The general survey hypothesis is that Buddhist values and cultivation increase happiness in all of the survey's ten domains, but particularly in the areas of psychological wellbeing and community wellbeing, based on participation in the curriculum at the College of Buddhist Studies just outlined.

In total, there were 718 surveys collected from all four samples: monastics completed 15 surveys, Buddhist scholars completed 69 surveys, non-Buddhists

completed 112 surveys, and the University of Michigan completed 522 surveys. The first survey section analyzed was satisfaction with life. Life satisfaction was measured as a composite average of Cantril's Ladder⁵⁹ and overall satisfaction,⁶⁰ since both metrics produced comparable results. Analysis of all three questions found that the mean scores of life satisfaction⁶¹ and experiential happiness⁶² consistently increase as predicted between non-Buddhists, Buddhist scholars, and monastics.

In general, religion's positive effects on well-being help explain why Buddhism predicts greater life satisfaction and happiness. A 2004 study on the effects of religiosity found that "the secular are twice as likely to say that they feel like failures, whereas the religious are twice as likely to say that they are very happy with their lives."⁶³ Excluding FGU non-Buddhists, the other three samples exhibit a moderate correlation between spirituality and life satisfaction⁶⁴ and a weak correlation between spirituality and happiness⁶⁵ that suggest religion is partly responsible for their higher scores in both domains. Though more research needs to be conducted to precisely discern religion's impact on happiness, current theories suggest Buddhists may benefit from stronger social support and comforting belief systems that promote greater satisfaction and happiness.⁶⁶

In particular, Buddhism seems to promote happiness more than life satisfaction, considering that differences between the three FGU samples were strongest in scores on

⁵⁹ See Survey 1.1

⁶⁰ See Survey 1.2

⁶¹ See Chart 1.1

⁶² See Survey 1.3 and Chart 1.2

⁶³ Paul Bloom, "Religion, Morality, Evolution," p. 188.

⁶⁴ See Survey Demographics and Chart 1.4

⁶⁵ See Survey Demographics and Chart 1.5

⁶⁶ Ed Diener. "Frequently Answered Questions."

experiential happiness, compared to life satisfaction. There may be two reasons Buddhist cultivation impacts happiness to a greater extent than life satisfaction. Firstly, Buddhist practice teaches present moment awareness and discourages judgmental discriminations,⁶⁷ to the extent that Buddhism may encourage people to experience happiness in the moment more than it encourages them to positively evaluate their lives. Secondly, Buddhism directly promotes social and self-actualization needs more closely associated to happiness.

As mentioned in section 1.5, the fifth objective of this thesis was: To discover if the progressive embodiment of Buddhist values diminishes the importance of external development relative to a psychological approach to well-being, which favors mentally conditioning one's responses to external phenomena. The fact Buddhism improves happiness to a greater degree than life satisfaction suggests Buddhists may take a more psychological approach to well-being. As Diener and Tay write:

"The fulfillment of basic needs leads people to place themselves higher on a scale of life satisfaction, while pursuing higher social and self-actualization needs is more closely associated with positive feelings and enjoying life, even when basic needs are lacking."⁶⁸

Evidence of enhanced psychological well-being reported between the three FGU samples supports this hypothesis. On average, Buddhist cultivation progressively increases a person's satisfaction with their mental well-being.⁶⁹ In line with Buddhism's happiness hypothesis in section 2.2, Buddhist cultivation also reduces instances of psychological suffering and fosters positive mental balance. Among the twelve measures of positive and

⁶⁷ T30, no. 1579, p. 475c11-14.

⁶⁸ Louis Tay and Ed Diener. "Needs and Subjective Well-being around the World."

⁶⁹ See Survey 3.1 and Chart 2.1

negative affect in the second survey section, there were ten measures that demonstrate a persistent improvement in psychological well-being based on one's commitment to Buddhism. Three composite metrics were used to combine scores on positive affect,⁷⁰ negative affect,⁷¹ and net affect⁷² to show the strong correspondence between commitment to Buddhism and positive psychological outcomes.

There were only two of twelve measures where commitment to Buddhism did not entirely predict positive psychological outcomes: Buddhist scholars more frequently reported feeling “bad,” compared to non-Buddhists,⁷³ and monastics more frequently reported feeling “angry,” compared to Buddhist scholars.⁷⁴ Overall, however, Buddhism's positive psychological effects consistently appear across measures of psychological well-being, just as hypothesized.

As mentioned, these results can be partially explained by religion's positive impact on well-being, since people who attend religious services experience more positive emotions and fewer negative emotions, than people who attend less often or not at all.⁷⁵ It is very likely Buddhist scholars and monastics experience greater psychological well-being, because they attend morning and evening services as part of their daily life at the College of Buddhist Studies. The psychological benefits of the college's morning service are verified by a study on the effects of meditation in a group of forty undergraduate Chinese students. After only five days of twenty minute meditation

⁷⁰ See Survey 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 2.7, 2.10, 2.12, and Chart 2.2

⁷¹ See Survey 2.2, 2.4, 2.6, 2.8, 2.9, 2.11, and Chart 2.3

⁷² See Chart 2.4

⁷³ See Survey 2.4 and Chart 2.5

⁷⁴ See Survey 2.11 and Chart 2.6

⁷⁵ Chaeyoon Lim, “In U.S., Churchgoers Boast Better Mood, Especially on Sundays.”

sessions, the Chinese students showed “greater improvement in conflict scores on the Attention Network Test, lower anxiety, depression, anger, and fatigue, and higher vigor on the Profile of Mood States scale, a significant decrease in stress-related cortisol, and an increase in immunoreactivity.”⁷⁶

According to a systematic research review by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ),⁷⁷ mindfulness meditation programs generally produce a 1% to 21% improvement of negative affect. In this study, Buddhist scholars improved negative affect by 2%, while monastics improved negative affect by 8%, compared to non-Buddhists. Currently, there are not enough randomized controlled trials to generalize mindfulness meditation’s impact on positive affect, but according to the current study, Buddhist scholars improved positive affect by 4%, while Buddhist monastics improved positive affect by 8%, compared to non-Buddhists.

Of course, Buddhist contemplative practices create psychophysiological affects which impact the body, as well as the mind. For example, mindfulness meditation is reported to be more effective at preventing infection than exercise,⁷⁸ and the degree it prevents infection is predicted by the degree it also increases happiness.⁷⁹ This correspondence between meditation’s promotion of both physical and mental health is

⁷⁶ Yi-Yuan Tang et al., “Short-Term Meditation Training Improves Attention and Self-Regulation.”

⁷⁷ (in press) *Meditation Programs for Stress and Well-being*.

⁷⁸ Barrett, Bruce, et al.. "Meditation or Exercise for Preventing Acute Respiratory Infection: A Randomized Controlled Trial." *Annals of Family Medicine* 10, 4 (2012): 337-346. doi:10.1370/afm.1376.

⁷⁹ R.J. Davidson et al., “Alterations in Brain and Immune Function Produced by Mindfulness Meditation.”

best examined in studies on vagal tone, in which meditation improves vagal tone at the same time it improves a direct link between health and happiness.⁸⁰

In this particular study, Buddhism's promotion of psychological health is more pronounced, though there is still a slight improvement in physical health among the three FGU samples, according to a composite metric of six related health measures.⁸¹ Among the six health measures, the greatest difference between the three FGU samples appears in a measure of pain, where Buddhism predicts fewer instances of physical pain.⁸²

This result is not surprising, since there is relatively strong evidence of mindfulness meditation's positive effects on pain management, even after short training periods.⁸³ Buddhists who train in contemplative practices are able to reduce their experience of pain as suffering; though it is important to note this effect is moderated by the meditators' relative experience. Whereas novice meditators reduce suffering by suppressing emotional involvement and inhibiting pain's unpleasantness, advanced meditators reduce suffering by eliminating discursive thoughts and mindfully attending to pain.⁸⁴ According to the aforementioned AHRQ report, mindfulness meditation improved pain from 5% to 31%. In this study, Buddhist scholars improved pain by 2% and Buddhist monastics improved pain by 12%, compared to non-Buddhists.

⁸⁰ B.E. Kok et al., (in press) "How Positive Emotions Build Physical Health: Perceived Positive Social Connections Account for the Upward Spiral between Positive Emotions and Vagal Tone."

⁸¹ See Survey 5.1-5.6 and Chart 3.1

⁸² See Survey 5.4 and Chart 3.2

⁸³ F. Zeidan et al., "The Effects of Brief Mindfulness Meditation Training on Experimentally Induced Pain."

⁸⁴ Fadel Zeidan et al., "Brain Mechanisms Supporting the Modulation of Pain by Mindfulness Meditation."

From this evidence, one can begin to understand how Buddhism’s psychological approach to well-being operates, by mentally conditioning one’s responses to external phenomena. Contemplative training not only reduces instances of physical illness, it also reduces mental suffering, as a result of physical pain. By transforming their minds, Buddhist adepts are thus able to experience happiness more and more unconditionally. In the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, for instance, Śāntideva describes how supreme cultivation of the mind allows a bodhisattva to “produce happiness toward all phenomena” (Skt. *sarvadharmasukhagrānta samādhi*):

“For a bodhisattva who has obtained this meditative state, with respect to all sense objects, pain is felt as happiness indeed, not as suffering or as indifference... [The bodhisattva who has attained this meditative state], while being fried in oil, or while pounded like pounded sugarcane, or while crushed like a reed, or while being burned in the way that oil or ghee or yogurt are burned— has a happy thought arisen.”⁸⁵

Through this lens, one may glimpse the meaning of the ultimate, unconditional happiness of nirvana, discussed in section 2.1.

In addition to the psychological and psychophysiological effects just analyzed, Buddhist cultivation also produces very important psychosocial effects. The beginning of this analysis posited that religion establishes strong social support networks which help explain why Buddhism promotes life satisfaction and happiness. This hypothesis is supported by the Faith Matters Survey, which shows friends at church impact life

⁸⁵ Cecil Bendall, ed. *Śikṣāsamuccaya: A Compendium of Buddhist Teachings, Compiled by Śāntideva Chiefly from Earlier Mahāyāna Sūtras*, SS 181.

satisfaction more than friends in other contexts, and churchgoers who have more friends in their congregation experience higher life satisfaction as a result.⁸⁶

Among the three FGU samples, Buddhist cultivation slightly improves social support according to a composite metric of five different measures.⁸⁷ Although Buddhism improves social support in four of five measures, Buddhist monastics feel less “love” than Buddhist scholars.⁸⁸ Perhaps the stronger community ties enjoyed by monastics in the *sangha* provide more social support in general, without providing the sort of love usually expressed in attached relationships to one’s family members or spouse.⁸⁹

Buddhism’s psychosocial effects on happiness are not limited to the enhancement of one’s close personal relationships. They are also extended in one’s community relationships. As outlined in section 4.3.3, the College of Buddhist Studies provides Buddhist scholars and monastics a communal living environment which fosters close interpersonal relationships built on trust and mutual respect. Among the three FGU samples, Buddhist scholars and monastics feel a progressively stronger sense of community belonging⁹⁰ and trust toward others,⁹¹ compared to non-Buddhists.

As discussed in section 3.5, trust is a leading indicator of happiness that emerges from high levels of social cohesion. Interestingly, students at the College of Buddhist Studies live in an open environment without locks, yet they are more trusting than non-

⁸⁶ Chaeyoon Lim, “In U.S., Churchgoers Boast Better Mood, Especially on Sundays.”

⁸⁷ See Survey 8.1-8.5 and Chart 4.1

⁸⁸ See Survey 8.5 and Chart 4.2

⁸⁹ For a critique of Buddhism on the issue of love and attachment, see: Jonathan Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom*, pp. 128-134.

⁹⁰ See Survey 9.1 and Chart 4.3

⁹¹ See Survey 7.1-7.4 and Chart 4.4

Buddhists who regularly lock their rooms. Trust may be better established among Buddhist scholars and monastics, because their bonded community structure provides greater opportunities to connect with students during religious services, chores, meetings, and activities. Compared to non-Buddhists, Buddhist scholars and monastics likely feel happier and more satisfied that they belong to a community of closer, more trusted individuals.

As argued in chapter 3, Buddhists also exercise a strong reciprocity reflex developed in bonded communities practicing altruism and compassion. Theoretically, the Buddhist concept of happiness (*sukha*) is motivated by a desire for holistic well-being (*chandha*), which pursues happiness for oneself and others in tandem. Buddhists have an incentive to practice generosity (*dāna*), because their relationships are motivated by a common understanding of shared value, rather than mutual self-interest. In support of this hypothesis, the current study found that Buddhist cultivation increases charitable giving. While Buddhist cultivation only moderately increases monetary donations among the three FGU samples,⁹² it increases volunteerism to a very large degree. On average, Buddhist scholars volunteer 26% more time and monastics volunteer 43.2% more time than non-Buddhists.⁹³ This is the largest differential reported between the three FGU samples in all of the 123 survey measures. Surprisingly, Buddhist cultivation increases volunteerism even more than it increases spirituality.⁹⁴

⁹² See Survey 7.6 and Chart 4.5

⁹³ See Survey 7.7 and Chart 4.6

⁹⁴ Spirituality increases 15.4% among Buddhist scholars and 42.7% among Buddhist monastics. See Survey Demographics and Chart 1.3

Though it is certainly true that Buddhists both conceive happiness as *eudaimonia* and pursue it intrinsically through worthwhile, pro-social activities, like volunteering their time; it is uncertain if Buddhists are happier because they act altruistically. Among non-Buddhists and Buddhist scholars, there is a small correlation between happiness, spirituality, and volunteerism, which disappears among Buddhist monastics.⁹⁵ Though Buddhism contends that happiness is clearly boosted by altruism, there is currently insufficient scientific evidence supporting this claim.

As mentioned in section 1.5, the fourth objective of this thesis was: To compare the quality of subjective well-being in various practitioners (i.e. Buddhist and non-Buddhist, lay and monastic, novice and advanced) to discover how the importance of certain well-being domains may transform relative to a change in the practitioners values and perceptions. When asked to score the significance of objective living conditions on well-being, Buddhist monastics place comparatively greater importance on public transportation,⁹⁶ a quiet and peaceful neighborhood,⁹⁷ and a quality environment;⁹⁸ whereas non-Buddhists place comparatively greater importance on affordable housing⁹⁹ and well-paying job opportunities¹⁰⁰— conditions which Buddhist monastics rank as the least important. Buddhist cultivation does not predict any substantial difference concerning the importance of conditions on well-being as a whole,¹⁰¹ yet monastics

⁹⁵ See Survey 1.3, 7.7, Demographics and Chart 4.7 and 4.8

⁹⁶ See Survey 10.1 and Chart 5.1

⁹⁷ See Survey 10.2 and Chart 5.2

⁹⁸ See Survey 10.3 and Chart 5.3

⁹⁹ See Survey 10.6 and Chart 5.4

¹⁰⁰ See Survey 10.7 and Chart 5.5

¹⁰¹ See Survey 10.1-10.8 and Chart 5.6

express the most satisfaction with all eight of the living conditions measured.¹⁰² The fact that monastics are more satisfied with the same objective living conditions enjoyed by the other two FGU samples suggests that monastics experience a higher degree of satisfaction, which is internally, not externally oriented.

The psychological and economic benefits of Buddhism's intrinsic pursuit of happiness appear prominently in measures of material well-being and work. Buddhist monastics have fewer material resources¹⁰³ and more financial strain;¹⁰⁴ yet, they report less stress¹⁰⁵ and more satisfaction¹⁰⁶ with their financial situation. By contrast, non-Buddhists and Buddhist scholars experience less satisfaction and more stress with their finances, despite having more wealth. This paradox between having more and enjoying less likely results from a hedonic treadmill effect, discussed at length in section 3.4.

As previously explained, Buddhism cultivates an alternate way of economic life, which substitutes the pursuit of contentment and connectedness in place of the dissatisfying pursuit of pleasure and wealth. As argued, many personal, economic, and ecological problems may be solved by simply stepping off the hedonic treadmill and redefining one's pursuit of happiness. The fact that non-Buddhists and Buddhist scholars are comparatively wealthier than monastics, and yet they less frequently satisfy basic needs¹⁰⁷ while accruing more debt,¹⁰⁸ suggests an alarming misuse of wealth that likely

¹⁰² See Survey 10.9-10.16 and Chart 5.7

¹⁰³ See Survey Demographics and Chart 6.1

¹⁰⁴ See Survey 13.2 and Chart 6.2

¹⁰⁵ See Survey 13.1 and Chart 6.3

¹⁰⁶ See Survey 3.11 and Chart 6.4

¹⁰⁷ See Survey 13.4 and Chart 6.5

¹⁰⁸ See Survey 13.3 and Chart 6.6

creates both a psychological and environmental cost. On the other hand, perhaps monastics experience greater satisfaction with fewer material resources, because the sangha adequately and equitably provides their material needs, while reducing their desire to strive individually for further material benefit. This position is supported by the current study, considering evidence that Buddhist cultivation in fact decouples the link between higher income and greater financial satisfaction,¹⁰⁹ while removing the desire to consume more to fill a sense of inadequacy.¹¹⁰

Buddhism's intrinsic pursuit of happiness also increases workplace satisfaction. The most important factors related to happiness at work include job satisfaction, work engagement, and organizational commitment.¹¹¹ On average, greater commitment to Buddhism predicts higher satisfaction with one's work situation¹¹² and current work life.¹¹³ Among the three FGU samples, there were insignificant differences in satisfaction with work-life balance, job conditions, compensation, and autonomy; Buddhism's promotion of workplace satisfaction is therefore most likely related to Buddhist scholars and monastics taking much more interest in their work.¹¹⁴ According to a seminal paper examining people's relation to work:

“Most people see their work as either a Job (focus on financial rewards and necessity rather than pleasure or fulfillment; not a major positive part of life), a Career (focus on advancement), or a Calling (focus on enjoyment of fulfilling, socially useful work)...

¹⁰⁹ See Survey 3.11, Demographics, and Chart 6.7

¹¹⁰ See Survey 13.5 and Chart 6.8

¹¹¹ Cynthia D. Fisher, “Happiness at Work.”

¹¹² See Survey 3.12 and Chart 7.1

¹¹³ See Survey 14.3 and Chart 7.2

¹¹⁴ See Survey 14.5 and Chart 7.3

Calling-oriented respondents reported higher life and job satisfaction, worked more hours, and missed fewer days of work.”¹¹⁵

Buddhist scholars and monastics probably experience greater job satisfaction, because they more often consider their work to be a life calling. Though there is insufficient evidence in this study to prove a direct link between one’s commitment to Buddhism and the relationship between one’s interest in work and one’s overall sense of purpose and meaning,¹¹⁶ there is certainly a connection between Buddhism’s intrinsic pursuit of happiness and the higher degrees of workplace satisfaction among scholars and monastics. This connection is supported by the most comprehensive review of General Social Survey (GSS) data on satisfaction and happiness among American workers, in which Tom Smith found clergy members are the happiest and most satisfied professionals because their work is intrinsically meaningful and worthwhile.¹¹⁷

Now that a wide variety of data has been analyzed, this case study will conclude with a summary of findings, several policy recommendations that may improve well-being, and several suggested avenues for future research to overcome the limitations of the present study.

4.3.5. Discussion and Recommendations

While many of this study’s findings support the theoretical arguments established in chapters two and three, in some cases, findings which are statistically insignificant cannot reliably prove Buddhism’s effects on happiness and well-being. Nevertheless, there are

¹¹⁵ A. Wrzesniewski et al., “Jobs, Careers, and Callings: People’s Relations to their Work.”

¹¹⁶ See Survey 14.5, 4.1, and Chart 7.4

¹¹⁷ Tom W. Smith, *Job Satisfaction in the United States*.

still many statistically significant findings (KW p-value < .05) among all the data collected and analyzed, which provide the first-known evidence of Buddhism’s promotion of happiness. The following table presents this “proof of *sukha*,” based on fifteen major findings, where variables of happiness consistently improve as one’s commitment to Buddhism increases:¹¹⁸

Table 5

Variable	Effect on Scholars	Effect on Monastics	KW p-value	Survey	Chart
Volunteerism	+26%	+43%	0	7.7	4.6
Spirituality	+15%	+43%	0	Demographics	1.3
Basic Needs Satisfaction	+18%	+36%	0	13.4	6.5
Financial Inadequacy	-10%	-26%	0	13.5	6.8
Interest in Work	+9%	+25%	0	14.5	7.3
Happiness	+7%	+18%	0	1.3	1.2
Financial Stress	-1%	-18%	.03	13.1	6.3
Trust	+9%	+17%	0	7.1-7.3	4.4
Life Purpose	+7%	+15%	.01	4.1	13.5
Life Satisfaction	+4%	+13%	.01	1.1-1.2	1.1
Community Belonging	+5%	+12%	.01	9.1	4.3
Work Satisfaction	+4%	+11%	.02	3.12	7.1
Mental Well-being	+5%	+10%	.01	3.1	2.1
Positive Emotions	+4%	+8%	.02	2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 2.7, 2.10, 2.12	2.3
Emotional Balance	+3%	+8%	.03	2.1-2.12	2.2

Overall, this study observed that one’s commitment to Buddhism consistently produces positive effects on happiness and many facets of well-being. This positive effect seems to be progressively enhanced by strengthening one’s commitment to Buddhism, since the positive effects observed among Buddhist scholars are almost always reproduced to a greater degree among Buddhist monastics. In a combined analysis of all the survey

¹¹⁸ Effect = the slope between the mean score of non-Buddhists and scholars or monastics

measures, Buddhist monastics exhibit the highest levels of well-being in twelve of thirteen domains and Buddhist scholars exhibit the second highest levels of well-being in eleven of thirteen domains.¹¹⁹ In general, Buddhism most positively affects the domains of satisfaction with life, psychological well-being, community vitality, and material well-being.¹²⁰

Of course, these effects on happiness may not be entirely determined by one's commitment to Buddhism; they may also be dependent on certain contextual variables. In order to examine the relative strength of Buddhism's effects on happiness, the improved well-being of Buddhist scholars and monastics may be compared to the well-being of the study's two control groups. Buddhism's effects on happiness may thus be validated by comparing the differences between scholars and monastics that study and practice Buddhism with students that do not study Buddhism, either in the same context at Fo Guang University or in a different context at the University of Michigan. By comparing data in this manner, the differences between Buddhist scholars and monastics may help explain the impact of Buddhism on happiness by representing the effects of Buddhist study and practice, as a variable isolated from the two distinct control groups.

Overall, students from the University of Michigan are slightly happier and more satisfied than non-Buddhists and Buddhist scholars, but they are less happy and less satisfied than Buddhist monastics.¹²¹ The effects of religion on the happiness of Buddhist scholars and monastics is likely separate from the two control groups, since the

¹¹⁹ See Chart 8.1

¹²⁰ See Survey Section 1, 4, 7, and 13

¹²¹ See Survey 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and Chart 9.1 and 9.2

spirituality of FGU non-Buddhists and students from the University of Michigan is similarly differentiated from the greater spirituality of Buddhist scholars and monastics.¹²² Together, these two findings suggest that the impact of Buddhist cultivation promotes happiness in monastics to a greater extent than the impact of contextual variables.

Within the extant body of research, contextual differences frequently appear in cultural comparisons of psychological well-being and international comparisons of material well-being. As Ed Diener explains:

“We see two primary forces determining how happy on average people in a nation are: the wealth (and concomitant human rights, equality, and freedom) of nations, and the norms governing the desirability of positive emotions.”¹²³

For instance, although Singapore has one of the lowest unemployment rates and highest GDP per capita in the world, it's also the least emotional country with only 36% of its citizens reporting feeling either positive or negative emotions on a daily basis.¹²⁴ However, Singaporeans relatively emotionless disposition may be more indicative of cultural biases than diminished well-being. In general, people from Western cultures highly prize positive emotions, because they tend to define happiness exclusively on the quality of their emotional experience; whereas people from Eastern Confucian cultures do

¹²² See Survey Demographics and Chart 9.3

¹²³ Ed Diener, “Frequently Answered Questions.”

¹²⁴ Jon Clifton, “Singapore Ranks as Least Emotional Country in the World; Residents Living in the Philippines are the Most Emotional.”

not particularly value positive emotions, because they tend to favor stability and detach themselves from emotional ups and downs.¹²⁵

Since the meaning of happiness and well-being is culturally constructed, it is important to recognize the cultural biases affecting outcomes in this study's samples.¹²⁶ How people perceive religious figures and how they evaluate their own happiness are both dictated by cultural norms,¹²⁷ to the extent that both Chinese culture and belief in Buddhism would affect how the three FGU samples understand and value happiness. As evident in prior research, the average American student at the University of Michigan experiences more intense positive and negative emotions, while the average non-Buddhist at Fo Guang University experiences greater emotional balance. Moreover, since Buddhist scholars and monastics report the highest levels of positive emotions and positivity, Buddhism's effects on happiness seem to be greater than the effects of cultural biases, such that Buddhist cultivation seems to objectively improve emotional well-being.¹²⁸

Although Buddhism's effects on happiness persist after accounting the influence of cultural norms on psychological self-reports, they could conceivably diminish in light of international differences on material well-being. The positive influence of Buddhism on material well-being, noted in this study's analysis, must therefore be separated from the influence of wealth, in order to be a legitimate effect of Buddhism. Based on the prior

¹²⁵ W. Tov and E. Diener, "Culture and Subjective Well-Being."

¹²⁶ For research on linguistic differences between the expression of happiness in Chinese and English, see: Carl A. Polley, "Metaphors for Happiness in English and Mandarin Chinese." For research on cultural differences, see: Victoria C. Plaut et al., "The Cultural Construction of Self and Well-Being: A Tale of Two Cities."

¹²⁷ S. Oishi et al., "Was He Happy? Cultural Differences in the Conceptions of Jesus." N. Epley et al., "Believers' Estimates of God's Beliefs are More Egocentric than Estimates of Other People's Beliefs."

¹²⁸ See Survey 2.1-2.12, 4.5 and Chart 9.4-9.7

analysis, students at the University of Michigan follow the same pattern as non-Buddhists and Buddhist scholars at Fo Guang University. Although they possess much more wealth¹²⁹ and experience less financial strain,¹³⁰ they paradoxically feel more stress about their personal finances.¹³¹ Compared to Buddhist monastics, they possess more debt,¹³² fulfill fewer basic needs,¹³³ experience less financial satisfaction,¹³⁴ and feel more financially inadequate.¹³⁵ Once again, Buddhist cultivation seems to affect the material well-being of monastics more than any contextual variables. As argued in section 3.5, Buddhism's positive effect on material well-being may result from diminishing the negative consequences of pursuing happiness on a hedonic treadmill, since increasing commitment to Buddhism weakens both the link between life satisfaction,¹³⁶ financial satisfaction,¹³⁷ and wealth.

Most likely, one's commitment to Buddhism primarily explains the major improvements to happiness and well-being measured by this study, because Buddhism's impact on scholars and monastics generally outperforms the impact of contextual variables on FGU non-Buddhists and students from the University of Michigan. Nevertheless, Buddhist scholars and monastics do not always report greater happiness and well-being. In total, there were three domains in which one's commitment to Buddhism did not entirely predict higher levels of happiness and well-being, as

¹²⁹ See Survey Demographics and Chart 10.1

¹³⁰ See Survey 13.2 and Chart 10.2

¹³¹ See Survey 13.1 and Chart 10.3

¹³² See Survey 13.3 and Chart 10.4

¹³³ See Survey 13.4 and Chart 10.5

¹³⁴ See Survey 3.11 and Chart 10.6

¹³⁵ See Survey 13.5 and Chart 10.7

¹³⁶ See Survey 1.1, 1.2, Demographics and Chart 10.8

¹³⁷ See Survey 3.11, Demographics, and Chart 10.9

hypothesized: Buddhist scholars expressed slightly less satisfaction with their neighborhood and government, compared to non-Buddhists, while Buddhist monastics expressed slightly worse time balance, compared to non-Buddhists and Buddhist scholars.¹³⁸

This difference in time balance between the three FGU samples is highly insignificant though (KW p-value = 0.9964).¹³⁹ Across six different time balance measures, the only statistically significant finding (KW p-value < 0.5) actually shows better time balance among Buddhist scholars and monastics.¹⁴⁰ However, there is one alarming instance where time balance is dramatically different between populations. At the College of Buddhist Studies, the average woman suffers 9% worse time balance¹⁴¹ and 10% worse work-life balance¹⁴² than the average man. It is likely that these women experience greater time-pressure and less satisfaction due to the additional demands of female dorm life, mentioned in section 4.3.3 (e.g. extra chores, cooking, religious services, etc...).

Since the College of Buddhist Studies aims to cultivate ethics in its students, it may consider reducing excessive time-pressure, since there is strong evidence that time-balance, not religiosity, predicts pro-social behavior.¹⁴³ College administrators may also consider standardizing male and female dorm regulations, since students often complain

¹³⁸ See Survey Section 6, 10, 12 and Chart 8.1

¹³⁹ See Survey 6.1-6.6 and Chart 11.1

¹⁴⁰ See Survey 6.2 and Chart 11.2

¹⁴¹ See Survey 6.1-6.6 and Chart 11.3

¹⁴² See Survey 14.4 and Chart 11.4

¹⁴³ John M. Darley and Daniel C. Batson, "From Jerusalem to Jericho": A Study of Situational and Dispositional Variables in Helping Behavior."

that frequent changes in the regulations cause an unnecessary amount of stress and instability each semester. Moreover, some students may feel the college unfairly discriminates between men and women by assessing them differently in practicum evaluations based on separate gender requirements regulating dorm life.

Besides these differences in well-being among men and women, there are also notable differences in well-being among English and Chinese speakers at Fo Guang University. On average, English speakers feel 40% less comfortable and less accepted in their community, compared to Chinese speakers.¹⁴⁴ In addition, when asked whether they felt a strong sense of belonging to their local community, Chinese speakers were unanimously ambivalent, whereas English speakers expressed a wide range of feelings.¹⁴⁵

Although the College of Buddhist Studies is an international environment, including students from eleven different countries at the time of this study; international students comprise a very small minority of the student body, composed primarily of local Taiwanese or Chinese immigrants. It is not surprising then that Chinese and English speakers experience very different feelings about their membership to Fo Guang University. Since Chinese speakers feel comfortable and accepted all or most of the time, there is no relationship between either their feelings of belonging and acceptance or their feelings of acceptance and happiness. On the other hand, since English speakers express a

¹⁴⁴ See Survey 9.8 and Chart 12.1

¹⁴⁵ See Survey 9.1 and Chart 12.2

wide range of feelings, there is a substantial relationship between both their feelings of belonging and acceptance and their feelings of acceptance and happiness.¹⁴⁶

Based on this data, native English speakers obviously experience comparatively greater hardship in a dominant Chinese environment, where language and culture pose unique obstacles to the fulfillment of their social and community needs. A recent study on well-being among expats in China shows that 96% cite language difficulties and 87% cite cultural differences as the major challenges in their lives.¹⁴⁷ According to self-determination theory, happiness and human development are intrinsically linked to the fulfillment of “innate psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness.”¹⁴⁸ English speakers who are unable to understand or effectively communicate in Chinese are likely to experience reduced motivation, performance, and well-being, as a result of failing to meet these innate needs.

Since the College of Buddhist Studies provides an English language graduate program, it does not require its students to be proficient in Chinese; however, the resident monastics and office staff who currently manage student affairs and dorm life cannot effectively communicate in English. Thus, if the college would like to alleviate English speakers’ discomfort and improve their well-being, administrators may consider investing in staff who can effectively communicate in English. As additional measures, the college may also consider providing opportunities for the Chinese and English communities to

¹⁴⁶ See Survey 1.3, 9.1, 9.8 and Chart 12.3 and 12.4

¹⁴⁷ Ray Clancy, “Expats See China as Welcoming but are Bothered by Overcrowding and Pollution, Research Shows.”

¹⁴⁸ Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, “The ‘What’ and ‘Why’ of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior.”

interact more with one another by establishing spaces and activities for socializing. After this study concluded, it is worth mentioning that the College of Buddhist Studies partially addressed these concerns by opening a common room, where international students can socialize with each other, and an English Corner, where they can meet Chinese students in a comfortable setting where English is spoken.

4.3.6. Present Limitations and Future Directions of this Study

This study is primarily limited by the size and homogeneity of its sample. The strength of evidence is weakened by the small sample size of Buddhist monastics (11), compared to Buddhist scholars (54) and non-Buddhists (110). In addition, due to the limited time and support afforded this study, samples were concentrated on a focus group at Fo Guang University, in order to reduce variability and isolate the impact of Buddhism on happiness. Future research should therefore extend the preliminary evidence provided by this single case study to studies in larger, more diverse Chinese Buddhist communities. Future data should also be analyzed across multiple indicators of increasing commitment and engagement to Buddhism, since additional indicators, such as the duration of one's engagement with Buddhism, can better discern the nature of differences beyond those explained simply by lay and monastic lifestyles.

While extending the breadth of this study, equal attention should also be paid to enhance the even distribution of sample sizes in comparative groups (i.e. Buddhist monastics, Buddhist scholars, and non-Buddhists), in order to strengthen evidence of Buddhism's impact on practitioners embodying varying degrees of commitment and experience. The impact of Buddhism on well-being could also be studied longitudinally,

such that the efficacy of improving well-being is understood at different stages of development during the course of one's training.

In future studies, the quality of questions could also be improved to better solicit differences between Buddhists and non-Buddhists. The current survey asked several questions which were not particularly relevant to either student or monastic lifestyles. For instance, questions on national governance could have been replaced by more appropriate questions on administrative bodies in the school or *sangha*; questions on affordable living arrangements and income could have considered the unique provisions already provided to students and monastics; and questions with country specific responses could have instructed alien residents whether to answer for their country of origin or their country of residence.

Lastly, this study only analyzed how happiness varied across comparative groups and it did not analyze how happiness varied within a given population. Future research may therefore better understand happiness by targeting variance within a specific Buddhist population. Admittedly, this type of fine-grained analysis first requires the current field of research to mature, so that a larger body of evidence can connect broad patterns in the data to a theoretical framework. The three broad areas of interest discussed in this thesis (psychology, economics, and sociology) help identify fruitful avenues where research can be reliably developed into a future framework.

One particular theory which this study fails to provide sufficient evidence to support concerns the link between Buddhism, happiness, and altruism. Although spirituality, happiness and volunteerism are among the variables most impacted by one's

commitment to Buddhism; there is no evidence that spirituality moderates the positive impact of Buddhism on happiness¹⁴⁹ and volunteerism.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, future research should specifically target the connection between altruism and happiness to discover whether or not the strength of one's commitment to Buddhism is truly the crucial factor explaining Buddhism's positive effect on individual and collective well-being.

Overall, this thesis uniquely contributes to the future development of research by expanding current knowledge on Buddhism's effects on happiness and by providing an initial framework, in which they can be understood in terms of traditional sources of meaning. The "science of *sukha*" will be better able to describe Buddhism's effects on happiness by targeting and contextualizing aspects of happiness which are uniquely important to Buddhists. Moreover, it will be an improvement upon the current psychological model, which defines happiness as a product of (P)ositive emotion, (E)ngagement, (R)elationships, (M)eaning, and (A)chievement.¹⁵¹ Based on a composite measure of PERMA, Buddhist scholars and monastics report only slightly higher scores than non-Buddhists,¹⁵² and although Buddhist cultivation significantly increases positive emotion and meaning,¹⁵³ it does not significantly affect engagement,¹⁵⁴ personal relationships,¹⁵⁵ or achievement.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, P.E.R.M.A. is a limited model of well-being, incapable of describing the full range of Buddhism's effects in this study.

¹⁴⁹ See Survey 1.3, Demographics and Chart 1.5

¹⁵⁰ See Survey 1.3, 7.7 and Chart 4.7, 4.8

¹⁵¹ M.E.P. Seligman, *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*.

¹⁵² See Survey 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 2.7, 2.10, 2.12, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4 and Chart 13.1

¹⁵³ See Survey 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 2.7, 2.10, 2.12, 4.1 and Chart 2.3, 13.2, and 13.5

¹⁵⁴ See Survey 4.2 and Chart 13.3

¹⁵⁵ See Survey 3.5 and Chart 13.4

Chapter 5 Conclusion

5.1 Mapping the Territory and Boundaries of Current Research

Throughout the course of its modern history, Buddhists have taken multiple perspectives, emphasizing either the similarities or differences between Buddhism and science.¹⁵⁷ In the case of Chinese Buddhists, for example, advocates of science proclaimed that both Buddhism and science established the same truth, though Buddhism possessed a higher form of empiricism grounded in ethics.¹⁵⁸ Today, the Dalai Lama takes a similar position, advocating science by proclaiming its compatibility with Buddhism.¹⁵⁹

Admittedly, however, Buddhism and science do not converge at a singular truth, and there are many instances where correspondence is accompanied by conflict. Although this thesis builds a positive case for engaging Buddhism to the science of happiness, it is essential to delineate the territory and boundaries where exchange is fruitful, based on a keen understanding of underlying similarities and differences. Although originally, all sciences grew from philosophy; the inter-relationship between Buddhism's investigation of subjectivity and science's investigation of objectivity need to be clearly understood, before Buddhist philosophy and ethics can inform related sciences (i.e. psychology, economics, and sociology). Thus, this section will examine the (1) epistemological, (2) methodological, (3) ethical, (4) political, and (5) religious

¹⁵⁶ See Survey 4.4 and Chart 13.6

¹⁵⁷ Donald S. Lopez Jr., *Buddhism and Science: A Guide for the Perplexed*.

¹⁵⁸ Erik Hammerstrom, "Buddhists Discuss Science in Modern China (1895-1949)."

¹⁵⁹ Dalai Lama, *The Universe in a Single Atom: The Convergence of Science and Spirituality*.

conflicts obstructing dialogue between Buddhism and science on the subject of happiness, in an effort to set the terms of debate for future research to further substantiate, challenge, and expand upon the scientific theory outlined by this thesis.

The first and most basic conflict derives from epistemological differences between Buddhism and science. In a very general sense, Buddhism is spiritual, qualitative, subjective and value-based; whereas science is material, quantitative, objective, and fact-based. Typically, secular and scientifically minded Buddhists cite the following excerpt from the *Kālāma sutra* to prove Buddhism possesses an empirical method compatible with science:

“Yes, Kalamas, it is proper that you have doubt, that you have perplexity, for a doubt has arisen in a matter which is doubtful. Now, look you Kalamas, do not be led by reports, or tradition, or hearsay. Be not led by the authority of religious texts, not by mere logic or inference, nor by considering appearances, nor by the delight in speculative opinions, nor by seeming possibilities, nor by the idea: ‘this is our teacher’. But O Kalamas, when you know for yourselves that certain things are unwholesome (Skt. *akuśala*), and wrong, and bad, then give them up...And when you know for yourselves that certain things are wholesome (Skt. *kuśala*) and good, then accept them and follow them.”¹⁶⁰

Alone, this passage suggests Buddhism is not only empirical, embracing preliminary skepticism and upholding first-person investigation higher than any religious authority; it also suggests Buddhism is a veritable science of happiness, considering truth is born purely from the realization of good qualities, which create happiness and well-being (*eudaimonia*).

Yet, interpreting this passage in isolation ignores the importance of Buddhism’s deeply religious, supernatural, and devotional elements, in a facile attempt to reinterpret it

¹⁶⁰ Walpola Rāhula and Paul Demiéville. *What the Buddha Taught*, p. 2-3.

as a science. A closer look at the context of the *Kālāma sūtra* shows that the Buddha taught the Kalamas to experientially verify the fruits of a virtuous and happy life only as a provisional launching pad to faith. After accumulated confidence in the teachings inspired faith, disciples were endowed with the capacity to right view, which was not gained by empiricism, but by accepting Buddha's unique dispensation of the Dharma as truth.¹⁶¹ Moreover, the Buddha warned his disciples that people would go to hell if they considered his teachings to be purely a naturalistic, rational account of reality, like that presented by science:

“Sariputta... should anyone say of me: ‘The recluse Gotama does not have any superhuman states, any distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones. The recluse Gotama teaches a Dhamma [merely] hammered out by reasoning, following his own line of inquiry as it occurs to him’ - unless he abandons that assertion and that state of mind and relinquishes that view, then as [surely as if he had been] carried off and put there he will wind up in hell.”¹⁶²

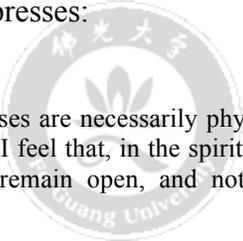
Clearly, epistemic differences separate Buddhism and science. The epistemological differences that divide Buddhist and scientific knowledge of happiness are based on how each separately define knowledge. According to Thomas Kasulis, Western thought generally defines knowledge objectively, by separating knowledge of an object from its subject and by focusing on the integrity of the object itself; whereas East Asian thought defines knowledge subjectively, as a process of becoming intimately familiar with the object and by emphasizing its non-duality and interdependence with the subject.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Bhikkhu Bodhi, “A Look at the Kalama Sutta.”

¹⁶² Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi trans. “Mahasihanada Sutta (The Greater Discourse on the Lion’s Roar), MN12.”

¹⁶³ Thomas P. Kasulis, *Intimacy or Integrity: Philosophy and Cultural Difference*.

This fundamental difference between Western and East Asian thought is a persistent source of conflict between Buddhism and science. Mentalism and physicalism are two opposing poles where Buddhism and science cannot possibly engage one another, due to their exclusive epistemic focus on either mind or matter. There are certain schools of Buddhist thought, for instance, which contend happiness is in the mind only and worldly improvements arise purely through the purification of one's mind.¹⁶⁴ This strand of mentalism, which reduces all physical phenomena to mental phenomena, cannot possibly affirm the validity of scientific knowledge, based on objective observations of the natural world. On the other hand, science cannot meaningfully engage Buddhism based on physicalist assumptions, which reduce all mental phenomena to physical phenomena. As the Dalai Lama expresses:



“The view that all mental processes are necessarily physical processes is a metaphysical assumption, not a scientific fact. I feel that, in the spirit of scientific inquiry, it is critical that we allow the question to remain open, and not conflate our assumptions with empirical fact.”¹⁶⁵

There is epistemic conflict between Buddhism and science, because science currently presupposes Western ways of thinking and knowing on a rational, objective basis, while denying the subjective ways of knowing asserted by East Asian forms of thought. For example, there is considerable ongoing dialogue between Buddhists and neuroscientists on the relationship between the mind and the brain, yet the latter tends to study mental phenomena purely in terms of its physical properties. Understanding Buddhism's transformative effects on happiness in this manner is highly problematic, since Buddhism

¹⁶⁴ Such ultimate views are discussed extensively in the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*, as exemplified by the following quote: “If a bodhisattva wishes to attain a pure land he should purify his mind.” See: T14, no.475, p.538c4-5.

¹⁶⁵ Dalai Lama, *The Universe in a Single Atom: The Convergence of Science and Spirituality*, p. 128.

has historically conflicted with physicalism.¹⁶⁶ Nonetheless, today, there is a widespread cultural tendency to inappropriately apply neuroscientific explanations to other fields of knowledge without respecting their limitations.¹⁶⁷ This mistaken belief that neuroscience provides conclusive, authoritative evidence on the inner workings of human thought and behavior is an extreme form of scientism, popularly expounded by Francis Crick's 1994 book, *The Astonishing Hypothesis*, which declared:

“You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.”¹⁶⁸

Despite such far-reaching claims, science is limited to the study of objective, physical, and quantifiable phenomenon. Although neuroscience provides an essential link explaining human behavior in terms of its underlying neurobiology; it cannot describe the non-physical, qualitative and subjective mental processes involved in happiness, because it cannot detect information on the qualia of someone's personal experience. Since Buddhism posits that truth is authenticated by meditative realization, which is personal and inaccessible to the inter-subjective methods used by science, then “true” knowledge of wisdom and virtue lie outside current scientific investigation, such that the “science of *sukha*” may be an imaginary, contrived body of knowledge.

The epistemic conflict between Buddhism and science which separates these two bodies of knowledge also manifests methodological conflicts, which distinguish separate ways of understanding happiness. As Owen Flanagan argues:

¹⁶⁶ Charles Goodman, Review of *Brains, Buddhas, and Believing: The Problem of Intentionality in Classical Buddhist and Cognitive-Scientific Philosophy of Mind*.

¹⁶⁷ Cliodhna O'Connor et al., “Neuroscience in the Public Sphere.”

¹⁶⁸ Francis Crick, *The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul*, p. 3.

“...the extant research on Buddhism and happiness is heterogeneous in terms of what states of body or mind it targets. The work just discussed connects Buddhism to effects on the immune system or on attention; concentration, and cognition; or on suppression of the startle response; or on face reading. This work is not about the effects of Buddhism on happiness. Even the work that claims to be on happiness is not, in every case, at least obviously, about happiness. This is because positive mood or positive affect does not obviously equal happiness, even in the colloquial sense(s). The tools that we currently use are simply not powerful enough to yield fine-grained descriptions of the mental states of subjects that would enable us, for example, to say, ‘Look, there is the compassion. Notice how it looks different from loving kindness.’”¹⁶⁹

Generally speaking, the primary impasse to current research is that happiness is a mongrel concept, which changes meaning in its various contexts and which is scientifically measured using multiple constructs that do not share a common point of view with Buddhism. Measures of subjective well-being (SWB) and psychological well-being (PWB) roughly correspond to the concepts of hedonism and eudaimonism,¹⁷⁰ discussed at length in Chapters 2 and 3. However, other overlapping constructs like quality of life, life satisfaction, and experiential happiness obscure our understanding of the whole and make comparisons to Buddhist concepts more difficult. Research on meditation also suffers from the same widespread incongruence between divergent theoretical and methodological perspectives.¹⁷¹ In spite of significant growth in contemplative neuroscience research, the field is still in its infancy and our knowledge of happiness and Buddhism’s contemplative practices is still extremely limited.

Another methodological problem is that the Buddhist concept of happiness is difficult to measure using well-being metrics, which consider people to be the best judges of their own happiness and which measure happiness differently depending on the

¹⁶⁹ Owen Flanagan, *The Bodhisattva’s Brain: Buddhism Naturalized*, p. 51.

¹⁷⁰ R.M. Ryan et al., “Living Well: A Self-determination Theory Perspective on Eudaimonia,” C.D. Ryff and B.H. Singer, “Know Thyself and Become What You Are: A Eudaimonic Approach to Psychological Well-being.”

¹⁷¹ M.B. Ospina et al., “Meditation Practices for Health: State of the Research.”

particular survey mechanism employed. Firstly, there's a difference between the way Buddhists conceive happiness and the way happiness metrics measure it. In the *Happiness Hypothesis*, Jonathan Haidt conflates the two, falsely assuming that Buddhists who believe life is pervasive suffering (Skt. *duḥkha*) are disproven by global surveys which show the majority of the world's people are happy.¹⁷² Secondly, self-report measures based on life satisfaction and affect-based accounts may not accurately describe Buddhist definitions of happiness, because they validate discriminatory judgments and sense perceptions which are sensitive to short-term ephemera and hedonic desires and which do not necessarily distinguish transitory states of pleasure from lasting states of well-being. As Angus Deaton recently wrote:

“In a world of bread and circuses, measures like happiness that are sensitive to short-term ephemera, and that are affected more by the arrival of St. Valentine's Day than to a doubling of unemployment, are measures that pick up the circuses but miss the bread.”¹⁷³

The imprecision of self-report measures is also noted in contemplative science research, where self-reports were unreliable when assessing the impacts of mindfulness training (MBSR) upon well-being, because they could not explain differences between the training group and the controlled condition.¹⁷⁴ Considering these methodological issues, the current systems of measurement require much greater maturation, before they can accurately and reliably reflect a Buddhist concept of happiness.

Another conflict between Buddhism and science surfaces in the relationship between epistemology, methodology, and ethics. Since Buddhism is value-based and

¹⁷² Jonathan Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom*, pp. 103-104.

¹⁷³ Angus S. Deaton, “The Financial Crisis and the Well-Being of Americans,” p. 51.

¹⁷⁴ D.G. MacCoon et al., “The Validation of an Active Control Intervention for Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR).”

science is value-free, there is pervasive tension between how Buddhism and science evaluate happiness differently from either a normative or objective standpoint. As mentioned, Buddhism and science differently pursue knowledge according to epistemologies that either distance or join the knower and the known, based on distinct metaphysical assumptions related to the subject and object as either separate or non-dual. Since Buddhism does not separate the subject from the object, it conceives the well-being of oneself and others as a holistic unity (*chandha*); and since Buddhism joins the knower and the known, it conceives knowledge and happiness as both supported by ethics (*eudaimonia*). Attaining insight into the nature of reality first requires the cultivation of ethics to purify one's mind, based on the threefold practice of virtue, meditation, and wisdom, outlined in section 2.3.¹⁷⁵

In contrast, the science of happiness does not intrinsically associate ethics and happiness, such that one is contingent upon the other. Instead, positive psychology studies happiness objectively, free from values, by describing happiness, rather than prescribing ways to pursue it. Although some positive psychologists may present the descriptions of their field as prescriptions, they do not alone serve as a basis for any normative ethics, because happiness is neither conceived as universally valued or pursued by everyone in the same way. Since happiness is studied in different ways according to different values, there is no direct connection between the findings of positive psychology and the Buddhist concept of happiness (*sukha*).

¹⁷⁵ Martin J. Verhoeven, "Buddhism and Science: Probing the Boundaries of Faith and Reason."

For example, Buddhists who conceive happiness holistically and ethically would not consider themselves happy if their happiness caused suffering for others; but since positive psychology excludes ethics and studies the happiness of individuals, happiness can be motivated by either altruism or selfishness, as mentioned in section 3.6. By Martin Seligman's own admission, the current psychological model of happiness would consider Osama Bin Laden to be a very happy, flourishing individual who excels in measures of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and achievement.¹⁷⁶ Since ethics are excluded from positive psychology, happiness may also be associated to a host of studies which link positive affect and mood to negative attributes (i.e. gullibility, selfishness, risk-taking, substance abuse, binge eating, racial and gender profiling, and poor reactivity to threats) and negative outcomes (i.e. lower matriculation rates, incomes, creativity, persuasiveness, and overall less satisfaction from explicitly pursuing happiness).¹⁷⁷ Without concern for ethics, happiness may also be linked to another study which finds that porn stars have a more positive outlook, more positive feelings, more social support, higher self-esteem, greater spirituality, and a higher quality of life.¹⁷⁸ All this evidence suggests that happiness is neither always desirable, nor universally valued, according to positive psychology. There is even evidence that people who value certain outcomes associated with lower levels of happiness may not want to optimize their own well-being according to positive psychology's definition of happiness.¹⁷⁹ Yet taken

¹⁷⁶ RSA. "Flourish."

¹⁷⁷ Marta Zaraska, "Too Much Happiness Can Make You Unhappy, Studies Show."

¹⁷⁸ James D. Griffith et al., "Pornography Actresses: An Assessment of the Damaged Goods Hypothesis."

¹⁷⁹ Shigehiro Oishi et al., "The Optimum Level of Well-Being: Can People Be Too Happy?"

together, there is no direct connection between *sukha* and P.E.R.M.A., positive affect, positive mood, or any other construct of positive psychology which discounts ethics.

Since the science of happiness is value-neutral, a further conflict between Buddhism and positive psychology appears in the political arena, where ethics play an important role in guiding government policy. Although the science of happiness does not prescribe happiness, the efficacy of happiness based politics arguably depends on the relative degree to which the normative objectives of its policies correspond to scientifically verifiable improvements in well-being. The ability of Gross National Happiness to objectively measure subjective values illustrates the need for mature political discourse to commonly conceive of happiness as both validated by science and valued by society. Although a growing number of governments have incorporated happiness measures into policy frameworks, it is questionable to what extent their normative objectives and political outcomes advance a Buddhist concept of happiness, since there is no direct connection between *sukha* and the ways in which positive psychologists measure happiness or the ways in which governments pursue it.

So far, the novelty of happiness measures in organizations and governments produces little evidence of their actual performance to date. There are however, many instances where conflicts between Buddhism and Gross National Happiness arise in the relationship between how governments use positive psychology's objective measures to justify normative political objectives, which are not conducive to the promotion of Buddhism's own concept of happiness. For instance, the adaptation and global exportation of Gross National Happiness replaced the influence of Bhutan's Buddhist culture with western ideals. When Gross National Happiness is exported to America as a

supplement to Gross Domestic Product, happiness is still individually pursued and economic development still dominates political agendas. Two books by Arthur Brooks, president of the American Enterprise Institute, are particularly strong abuses of the politics of happiness, which hijack the movement by falsely pairing the science of happiness with conservative American agendas.¹⁸⁰

Elsewhere, there are similar instances of politically exploiting the science of happiness. In the United Kingdom, the Office for National Statistics employs well-being measures that reflect British values, more than they relate to known correlates of well-being.¹⁸¹ In Venezuela, although the largest share of its annual budget (37%) is spent on happiness; it is largely an excuse to allocate money to unidentified social programs without transparency or accountability.¹⁸² In China, happiness indices have been incorporated into the 12th five-year plan, but their credibility is questionable, considering the occupied capital of Tibet is reported to be the happiest city of all.¹⁸³ In North Korea, the politics of happiness is an entirely unscientific tool used to propagandize North Korea and legitimize its communist allies.¹⁸⁴ Even Bhutan faces disturbing social realities, where its oppressive treatment of the Lhotshampa¹⁸⁵ and its unrepresentative democracy¹⁸⁶ challenge the promotion of Buddhist values and Gross National Happiness.

¹⁸⁰ Arthur C. Brooks, *Gross National Happiness: Why Happiness Matters for America--and How We Can Get More of It*, Arthur C. Brooks, *The Battle: How the Fight between Free Enterprise and Big Government Will Shape America's Future*.

¹⁸¹ Bridget Grenville-Cleave, "Getting to Grips with the UK's Well-Being."

¹⁸² Andrew Rosati, "Venezuela Prioritizes 'Happiness' in its National Budget."

¹⁸³ "Vaunting the Best, Fearing the Worst."

¹⁸⁴ Jessica Colwell, "North Korean 'Global Happiness Index' Ranks China No. 1, USA Dead Last."

¹⁸⁵ See, for example: <http://www.bhutanese-refugees.com/>

¹⁸⁶ I.P. Adhikari, "Dictated Democracy?"

The final conflict between Buddhism and the science of happiness concerns religion. According to a Buddhist worldview, ultimate happiness cannot be found in this human life, as part of *samsara*:

“Do those who fall to earth from a mountain peak
Find happiness in space as they rush to destruction?
If we constantly race toward death from the time of birth,
How can beings find happiness in the time in between?”¹⁸⁷

Whereas the Buddhist concept of happiness has soteriological value, explained in section 2.1; positive psychology’s concept of happiness has no special function or meaning outside of promoting healthy human functioning. Based on its epistemic, methodological, and ethical limitations, positive psychology may only provide partial evidence of more conventional forms of happiness in Buddhist psychological theories. Although Buddhists regard the highest happiness as enlightenment, enlightenment is not a feeling, but rather a realization of truth and an end of suffering that is unconditioned, everlasting, and beyond the purview of science. Buddhism’s ultimate views of happiness therefore do not concern this research since they exceed its conventional scope. Instead, this research is limited to proving the benefits of skillfully pursuing happiness in a way that addresses both an individual’s existential crisis and modernity’s pressing social, environmental, and economic problems.

5.2 Suggestions for Further Research

The major epistemological, methodological, and ethical differences just mentioned often require us to revise our understanding of happiness. People who maintain both Buddhism

¹⁸⁷ Donald S. Lopez Jr., ed. *Religions of Tibet in Practice*, pp. 433-434.

and science as systems of truth must agree to continually constrain their beliefs according to the evolving and provisional nature of both systems. In general, happiness which is measured in conflict to Buddhist values cannot be called happiness by Buddhism's normative standards, regardless of its empirical validity; while at the same time, Buddhism's normative biases cannot color our interpretation of scientific evidence, if happiness is measured according to science's objective standards.

Unfortunately, today, the majority of Buddhists and scientists lack the commitment required to explore and understand each other's disciplines. Instead, Buddhists discuss science and scientists discuss Buddhism by asserting the primacy of their preferred belief system in instances where radical honesty would otherwise require revisionism. In other instances, Buddhists and scientists entirely neglect engagement with each other, either because they are ignorant or disinterested in each other's fields, or because they feel engagement actually threatens the integrity of their own beliefs.

The Buddhist scholar Donald Lopez presents an example of the latter case. In his recently published book, *The Scientific Buddha*, he portrays the engagement between Buddhism and science not as a dialogue, but as a new, abominable form of Buddhism that he believes should be eliminated from modern discourse.¹⁸⁸ Although Lopez is correct to criticize the oft mistaken viewpoints lamentably produced by the forced convergence of Buddhism and science, his comical caricature of their meeting belies the factual insights producing value through the exchange. Lopez's reactionary position argues against the facile equation of Buddhist and scientific findings, but it also sets exclusive terms that

¹⁸⁸ Donald S. Lopez Jr., *The Scientific Buddha: His Short and Happy Life*.

discredit the value of possible contributions and denies the possibility for future dialogue, based on mutual respect and mutual challenge.

If Buddhists and scientists are unwilling to subject their doctrines to invalidation, their respective biases will never allow enough Buddhist scientists or scientific Buddhists to learn from one another. Fortunately, there are a handful of Buddhist scientists who are exceptions and who provide much of the research and inspiration for this thesis. The most visible leader among them is the Dalai Lama, whose faith in the compatibility of Buddhism and science has gone so far as to allow his religious principles to be scientifically falsifiable. In the Dalai Lama's book on the relationship between science and spirituality, he claims:

“One fundamental attitude shared by Buddhism and science is the commitment to deep searching for reality by empirical means and to be willing to discard accepted or long-held positions if our search finds that the truth is different.”¹⁸⁹

Like the Dalai Lama, scientists interested in studying Buddhism's views on happiness must similarly agree to constrain their beliefs, by accepting Buddhism's orthodox positions until they can be reliably disproven. Since this thesis represents a first step in the dialogue between Buddhists and scientists on the issue of happiness, there are currently many more differences than similarities that provide useful opportunities for engagement. Thus, at present, it is more fruitful for future research to assume a model of comparative discourse based on mutual challenge, rather than convergence.

¹⁸⁹ Dalai Lama, *The Universe in a Single Atom: The Convergence of Science and Spirituality*, p. 25.

Overall, current measurements are too imprecise to target *sukha* as a unique form of happiness, based on Buddhist principles and practices; and yet, Buddhists and scientists cannot engage in meaningful exchange until measurements are capable of detecting important distinctions in the Buddhist concept of happiness. Considering this need for improved systems of measurement and assessment, there are three primary research programs that may help form the foundation for a Buddhist concept of happiness, including the development of (1) contemplative neurophenomenology, (2) clinical Buddhist psychology, and (3) secular ethics. These three programs offer particularly suitable directions for further research, because they directly address the epistemological, methodological, and ethical conflicts, discussed in the previous section.

The first research program in contemplative neurophenomenology leverages the strengths and limitations of Buddhism's investigation of subjectivity and science's investigation of objectivity, by complimenting Buddhism's first-person and science's third person approaches to knowledge. The program builds a more comprehensive understanding of mental phenomena by triangulating behavioral and neurological studies of an experimental condition with self-reports from meditators who participate in the same condition. Essentially, meditators first-person introspections are placed alongside science's third-person descriptions in a system where both can apply mutual constraints on our views about the mind.

Today, Alan Wallace is the foremost proponent of applying this research paradigm to the scientific study of *sukha*.¹⁹⁰ He believes the current methodological imprecision of self-reports, discussed in the previous section, can be improved by replicable meditation programs that enhance participants' attention, cognition, and emotional well-being, so that their introspective observations benefit from greater awareness and clarity of mind. So far, there is preliminary evidence that meditation in fact increases meta-awareness, perceptual vividness, and awareness of typically unconscious mental processes, while decreasing conceptual proliferation and projection of selfhood. However, before meditation can be implemented as a research method, there must be much more convincing proof that meditation reveals information about regular consciousness, and not just information about meditators' specific mental states.

A second research program in clinical Buddhist psychology would also substantially advance the “science of *sukha*.” As mentioned, current scientific knowledge is based on objective, rational ways of knowing based on Western thought. Since today's psychological sciences do not assimilate East Asian forms of thought, like Buddhism, they cannot suitably evaluate traditional Buddhist theories of mind and methods of cultivation implicated in the study of *sukha*. From the perspective of evolutionary psychology, for example, all positive and negative emotions are considered naturally occurring, healthy states of mind that contribute to well-being, so long as they are expressed in appropriate contexts. Such a model of healthy psychological functioning cannot possibly describe Buddhism's own model of well-being, based on transforming

¹⁹⁰ Alan B. Wallace, *Contemplative Science: Where Buddhism and Neuroscience Converge*.

negative emotions into positive emotions, until negative afflictions (greed, hatred, and delusion) are entirely eliminated.

So long as Buddhist psychology is placed within western psychological models, its orthodox views must be reinterpreted and its integrity sacrificed.¹⁹¹ Currently, there are several western therapies, mentioned in section 4.2, which apply insights and practices from Buddhism to clinical settings. In the future, Buddhist psychology can be further advanced by developing non-Western psychologies that utilize scientific methods to test theories and practices originating from indigenous Buddhist cultures in China, Tibet, Japan, Korea, South East Asia, and Sri Lanka.

Finally, the third research program in secular ethics can help clearly delineate the many forms of happiness. In the *Bodhisattva's Brain*, Owen Flanagan rightly delegitimizes the neuroscientific project to instantiate Buddhism's claim to cultivate happiness largely on methodological grounds, contesting that Buddhist definitions of happiness based on moral values and ethical behavior (*eudaimonia*) are not reflected in neuroscientific measurements of positive affect reflected by activation of the left prefrontal cortex.¹⁹² This limitation in the neuroscience of happiness could be in part addressed by Kent Berridge's recent research proposal to examine the relationship between the hedonic and eudaimonic circuitry associated with higher and lower states of

¹⁹¹ A good example of reinterpreting the Four Noble Truths to artificially fit within a western psychological model is presented by David Brazier, *The Feeling Buddha*.

¹⁹² Owen Flanagan, *The Bodhisattva's Brain: Buddhism Naturalized*.

happiness.¹⁹³ In addition, the Mind and Life institute directs a research program that specifically explores basic research on naturally occurring virtuous qualities, in response to the Dalai Lama's desire to develop a secular ethics, mentioned in section 1.6.

Although *sukha* may be accurately described as a branch of *eudaimonia*, it is vitally important to establish the unique relevance between research on *eudaimonia* and the Buddhist concept of happiness, so it is not confused with the philosophical and psychological traditions sharing the same term (i.e. Aristotelianism, Gestalt psychology, Jungian psychology, humanistic psychology, positive psychology, etc...). To separate *sukha* as a unique form of *eudaimonia*, future research could study how Buddhism's own system of virtues relates to positive psychology's system of character strengths.¹⁹⁴ To structure such an analysis, Buddhism's doctrinal discussion on the six perfections (Skt. *pāramitās*) could be functionally related to positive psychology research on the six categories of virtue.¹⁹⁵ Additionally, future research could utilize the VIA survey to analyze the prevalence of virtue in Buddhist communities and discover if Buddhist cultivation enhances character traits associated with specific virtues.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ Kent C. Berridge and Morten L. Kringelbach, "Building a Neuroscience of Pleasure and Well-being," pp. 19-20.

¹⁹⁴ For example, see: Ryan M. Niemiec, "Mindful Living: Character Strengths Interventions as Pathways for the Five Mindfulness Trainings."

¹⁹⁵ There may be relevant connections drawn between the following six perfections and six virtues: *sīlapāramitā* & justice, *vīryapāramitā* & courage, *prajñāpāramitā* & wisdom, *dānapāramitā* & humanity, *kṣāntipāramitā* & temperance, *dhyānapāramitā* & transcendence. For Buddhist scholarship on the six perfections, see: Dale S. Wright, *The Six Perfections: Buddhism and the Cultivation of Character*. For scientific research on the six virtues, see: M.E.P. Seligman and Christopher Peterson, *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*.

¹⁹⁶ The VIA survey is available for public use on the VIA Institute on Character's website: <http://www.viacharacter.org/www/>

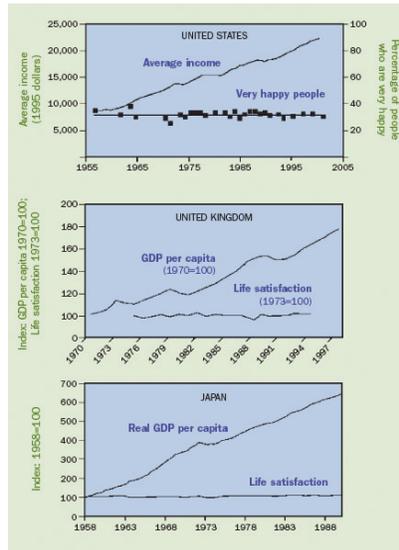
Lastly, there is a need for more Buddhist traditions to engage the dialogue between Buddhism and the science of happiness. Currently, the majority of scientific studies target contemplative practices from the Tibetan tradition, and occasionally from the Zen or vipassana traditions. Future studies should expand research to include aspects of Buddhism, which are not only limited to the contemplative practices popularly practiced in western countries. In addition, scholarship on Buddhist ethics should examine the normative differences between various traditions, by expanding its focus on Theravada Buddhism to include forms of East Asian Buddhism, while establishing ethical theories on happiness and well-being which are interpreted using Buddhism's own distinctive moral systems, and which do not exclusively rely upon western ethical categories.¹⁹⁷



¹⁹⁷ For current scholarship in this area, see: Charles Goodman et al., “Panel Two: Classifying Buddhist Ethics.”

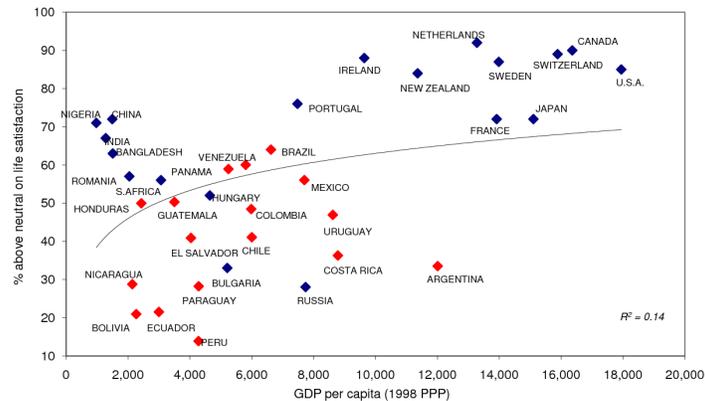
Appendix A: Figures

Figure 1: Trends in Life Satisfaction and Happiness vs. Per Capita Income in Affluent Societies



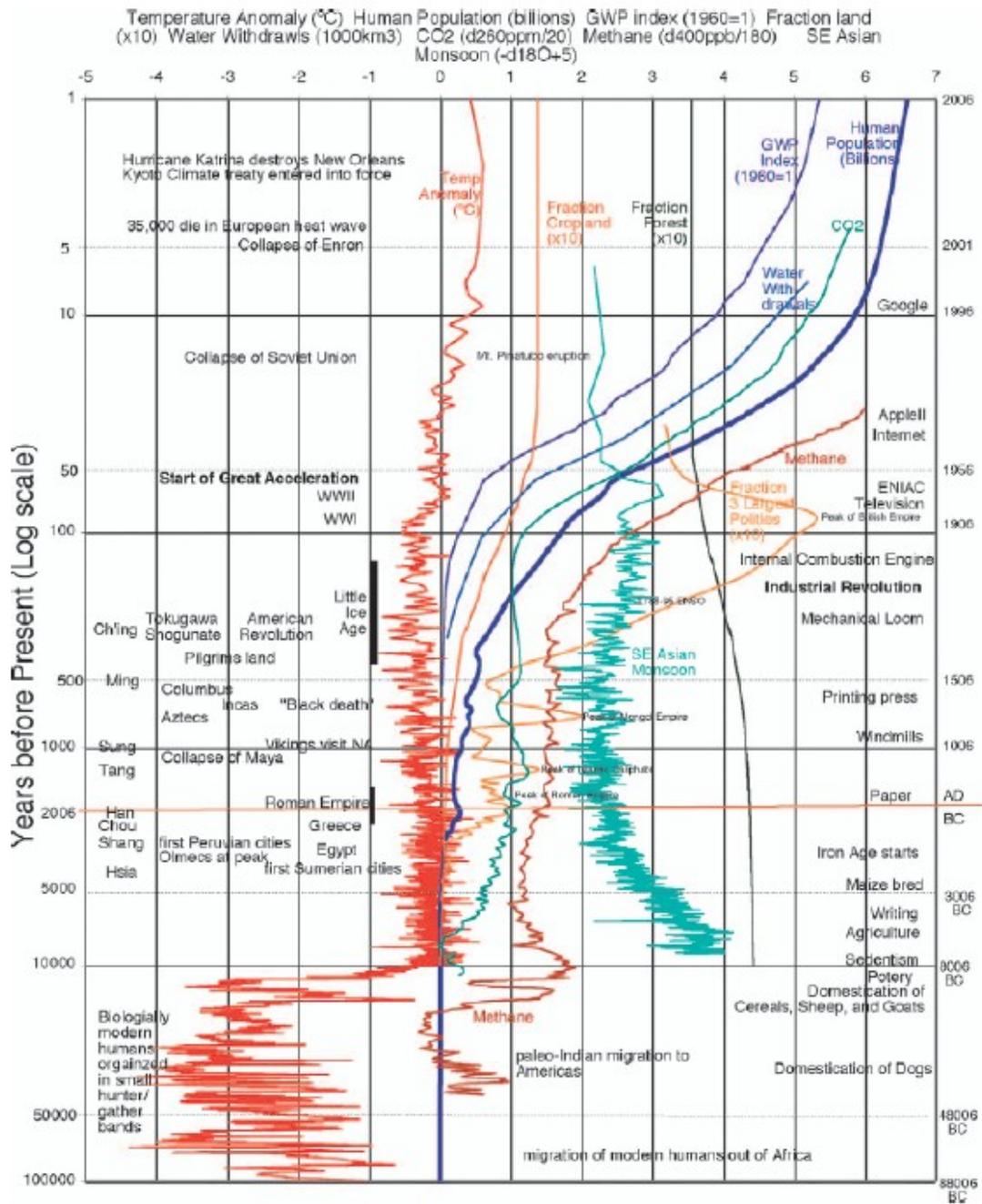
"Money Can't Buy You Love, Or Happiness." *Environment: Yale* 7.1, Spring 2008. New Haven, CT: Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, 24.

Figure 2: Life Satisfaction vs. GDP Per Capita



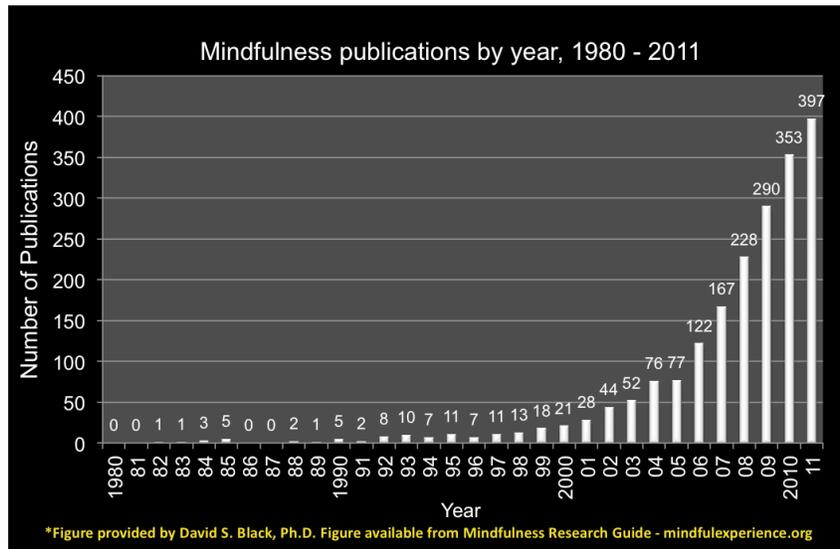
Graham, Carol and Stefano Pettinato. *Happiness and Hardship: Opportunity and Insecurity in New Market Economies*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2002.

Figure 3: Evolution of the Human-environment Relationship



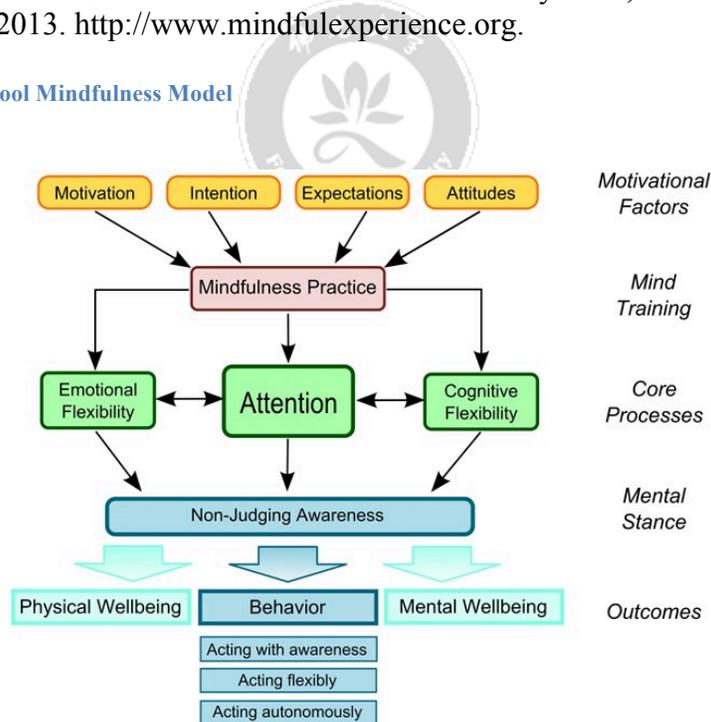
Schimel, David, et al. "Evolution of the Human-environment Relationship". In *Encyclopedia of Earth*. Eds. Cutler J. Cleveland. Washington, D.C.: Environmental Information Coalition, National Council for Science and the Environment, May 2, 2007. http://www.eoearth.org/article/Evolution_of_the_human-environment_relationship.

Figure 4: Mindfulness Publications by Year, 1980-2011



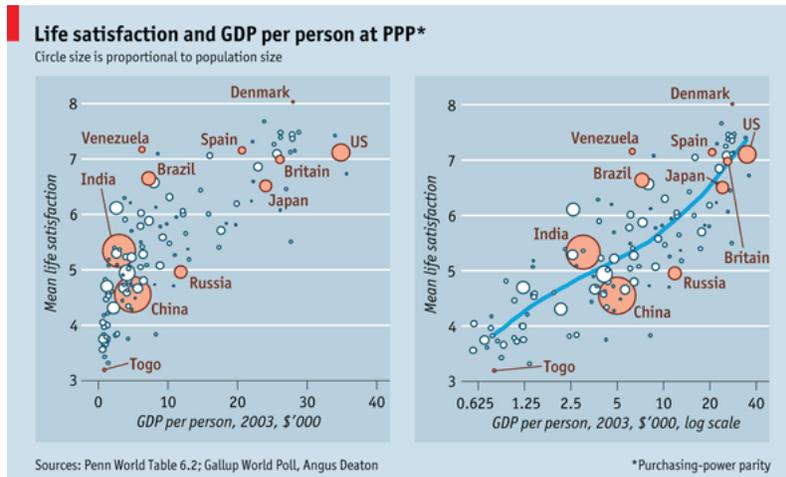
Mindfulness Research Guide. “Mindfulness Publications by Year, 1980-2011.” Accessed May 13, 2013. <http://www.mindfulexperience.org>.

Figure 5: The Liverpool Mindfulness Model



Malinowski, Peter. “Neural Mechanisms of Attentional Control in Mindfulness Meditation.” *Frontiers in Neuroscience* 7.8 (2013). doi: 10.3389/fnins.2013.00008. <http://www.frontiersin.org/Neuroscience/10.3389/fnins.2013.00008/abstract>.

Figure 6: Life Satisfaction and GDP Per Person at PPP



"Daily Chart: Money and Happiness." *The Economist*, November 25, 2010. Accessed May 6, 2013. http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2010/11/daily_chart_1.

Figure 7: Fo Guang University Happiness Proclamation

佛光大學

Fo Guang University Happiness Proclamation

WHEREAS, the United Nation's resolution adopted July 19, 2011 "Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development" recognizes "that the gross domestic product... does not adequately reflect the happiness and wellbeing of people..." and invites the pursuit of, "additional measures that better capture the importance of the pursuit of happiness and wellbeing in development"; and

WHEREAS, the idea of measuring people's happiness or wellbeing is an important tool that will help to create good policy and a healthy campus community;

WHEREAS, the campus understands the importance of creating a broad assessment of the happiness or wellbeing of its students, faculty, and staff using both objective and subjective indicators of well-being.

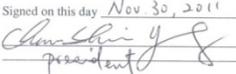
WHEREAS, the Happiness Initiative's survey data, objective indicators data and campus meeting reports provide a broad assessment of happiness or wellbeing along ten domains; and

WHEREAS, the campus community, students, faculty and staff will work together in using findings from The Happiness Initiative on campus to implement changes that increase the wellbeing of students and the campus community;

WHEREAS, Fo Guang University acknowledges the campus' role and responsibility for the happiness or wellbeing of the campus.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it proclaimed that:

- Fo Guang University supports the Happiness Initiative, led by the FGU Happiness team
- Fo Guang University is looking forward to seeing the results of the Happiness Initiative's survey and objective indicators
- Fo Guang University encourages members of the campus community to take the publicly-available survey and encourages efforts to conduct a random sampling of our population using the survey and ensure survey results are representative of the population
- Fo Guang University encourages the commencement of campus and community meetings in campus meeting spaces where campus members identify actions they are taking and want to take, and recommend action ideas for the campus
- Fo Guang University intends to consult the available happiness data and the recommendations from these campus and community meetings as it pursues future policy options in a time of scarce resources.
- Fo Guang University pledges to encourage participation in campus meetings and in other activities of the Fo Guang University Happiness Initiative.

Signed on this day Nov 30, 2011 at Fo Guang University
 (name)
 _____ (title)
 President

BuddhismAndHappiness.com. "公告 Proclamations." Accessed May 6, 2013. <http://buddhismandhappiness.com/%E5%85%AC%E5%91%8A-proclamation/>

Appendix B: Survey

Happiness Initiative Survey

Consent Form

A. INTRODUCTION

This survey is a project of The Happiness Initiative with consultation from the Personality and Well-Being Laboratory at San Francisco State University.

The purpose of the survey is to study how happiness and well-being are influenced by the conditions of our lives and communities. Your data will not be used for research purposes if you are under the age of 18.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this study, the following will occur:

You will fill out an online questionnaire. It takes most people 12-14 minutes to complete the questionnaire. At the end you will be given your personal results and guidance on how to interpret them, as well as median scores for the United States as a whole. You will also be given the opportunity, if you wish, to more fully understand aspects of your life by participating in a menu of optional surveys.

C. RISKS

We follow the European Union's Protection of Personal Data Directive 95/46/EU, the strongest code we know of for protecting personal data. You can read the full code and an executive summary online:

http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/information_society/data_protection/l14012_en.htm

In simple language: all of your responses will be anonymous; no one except those who use the data for the purpose of the Happiness Initiative and SF State University research study will have access to the personal data; data is only kept for as long as it is useful; and personal information will never be sold, traded or given away.

D. QUESTIONS

If you have other questions about this survey, you may contact the researchers at happy@sustainableseattle.org.

Thank you for your participation. We greatly appreciate it.

Section 1: Satisfaction With Life

1.1 Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. Suppose we say that the top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible. If the top step is 10 and the bottom step is 0, on which step of the ladder do you feel you personally stand at the present time?

Worst possible life for you	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Best possible life for you
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1.2 All things considered, how satisfied are you with life as a whole nowadays?

Not at all satisfied	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Extremely satisfied
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1.3 Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are?

Extremely unhappy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Extremely happy
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Section 2: Positive and Negative Experience

Please think about what you have been doing and experiencing during the past four weeks.

Then report how much you experienced each of the following feelings:

	Very rarely or never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often or always
2.1 Positive					
2.2 Negative					
2.3 Good					
2.4 Bad					
2.5 Pleasant					
2.6 Unpleasant					
2.7 Happy					
2.8 Sad					
2.9 Afraid					
2.10 Joyful					
2.11 Angry					
2.12 Contented					

Section 3: Domain Satisfaction

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with:

3.1 Your mental well-being (e.g. your life satisfaction and sense of optimism, self-esteem, and competence).

Extremely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Slightly satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely satisfied
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3.2 Your physical health (e.g., consider your exercise, sleep, nutrition).

Extremely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Slightly satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely satisfied
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3.3 Your leisure time (e.g., your time for recreating and socializing with family and friends).

Extremely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Slightly satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely satisfied
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3.4 Your sense of community belonging (e.g., your relationships and interactions with people in your neighborhood).

Extremely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Slightly satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely satisfied
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3.5 Your personal relationships (e.g., the vitality and affection of your relationships).

Extremely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Slightly satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely satisfied
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3.6 Your access to educational opportunities in your community (e.g., opportunities to participate in formal and informal education).

Extremely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Slightly satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely satisfied
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3.7 Your access to arts and culture in your community (e.g., opportunities to participate in cultural events)

Extremely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Slightly satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely satisfied
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3.8 The environmental quality of your neighborhood (e.g., the quality of your water, air, soil, forest cover, etc.).

Extremely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Slightly satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely satisfied
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3.9 Your neighborhood as a place to live (e.g., the variety and accessibility of natural, recreational, and lifestyle amenities)

Extremely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Slightly satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely satisfied
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3.10 The honesty and transparency of your local government (e.g., the responsibility of your city officials, police, etc.).

Extremely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Slightly satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely satisfied
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3.11 Your financial situation (e.g., your individual and family income, financial security, your level of debt).

Extremely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Slightly satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely satisfied
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3.12 Your work situation

Extremely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Slightly satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely satisfied
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Section 4: Psychological Well-Being

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

4.1 I lead a purposeful and meaningful life	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
4.2 I am engaged and interested in my daily activities	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
4.3 I am optimistic about my future	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
4.4 Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment from what I do	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
4.5 In general, I feel very positive about myself	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

Section 5: Health

5.1 In general, I would say my health is:

Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
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Please indicate, how much of the time during the past week...

5.2 You had a lot of energy	Very rarely or never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often or always
5.3 You could not get going	Very rarely or never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often or always
5.4 Physical pain prevented you from doing what you needed to do	Very rarely or never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often or always

Please rate your level of satisfaction

5.5 How satisfied were you with your ability to perform your daily living activities?	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
5.6 How satisfied were you with the quality of your exercise?	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied

Section 6: Time Balance

6.1 In a typical week, how much of your time are you able to spend doing the kinds of things that you enjoy?

None of my time	Not much of my time	Some of my time	Most of my time	All of my time
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6.2 Please indicate your level of agreement with this statement: In my daily life, I seldom have time to do the things I really enjoy.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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Here are some statements about how things are going in your life. When indicating your agreement with each statement, please think specifically about how things were for you over the past week.

6.3 My life has been too rushed	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
6.4 I have been able to take life at a leisurely pace	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
6.5 I have had enough time	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

to do what I needed to do	disagree		nor disagree		agree
6.6 I have had plenty of spare time	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

Section 7: Community Vitality

Please tell us how many of the following people you trust:

7.1 Your neighbors	Trust none of them	Trust a few of them	Trust some of them	Trust most of them	Trust all of them
7.2 Strangers that you encounter	Trust none of them	Trust a few of them	Trust some of them	Trust most of them	Trust all of them
7.3 Businesses in your community	Trust none of them	Trust a few of them	Trust some of them	Trust most of them	Trust all of them

7.4 Imagine that you lost a wallet or purse that contained two hundred dollars. Please indicate how likely you think it would be to have all of your money returned to you if it was found by someone who lives close by:

Not at all likely	Somewhat likely	Fairly likely	Very likely	Extremely likely
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7.5 How satisfied are you with your personal safety in your city or town?

Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
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Using the scale below, please indicate how frequently you have done these activities in the past 12 months.

7.6 Donated money to a charity	At least once a month	At least once every three months	At least once every six months	Once in the last year	Never
7.7 Volunteered your time to an organization	At least once a month	At least once every three months	At least once every six months	Once in the last year	Never

Section 8: Social Support

Please rate your level of satisfaction.

8.1 How satisfied are you with the support you get from your friends?	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
8.2 How satisfied are you with your personal	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor	Satisfied	Very satisfied

relationships?			dissatisfied		
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To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

8.3 People in my life care about me.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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Please indicate how much of the time during the past week...

8.4 You felt lonely	Very rarely or never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often or always
8.5 You felt loved	Very rarely or never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often or always

Section 9: Access to Education, Arts & Culture

9.1 How would you describe your feeling of belonging to your local community?

Very weak	Somewhat weak	Neither weak nor strong	Somewhat strong	Very strong
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Here is a list of things which people indicate are desirable to them in deciding where to live. Please indicate your desirable each item is to have near where you live.

In your neighborhood or community, how IMPORTANT is it for you to have...

9.2 Sports and recreational activities?	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
9.3 Artistic and cultural activities?	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
9.4 Activities to develop skills through informal education?	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important

In your neighborhood or community, how SATISFIED are you with...

9.5 Your access to sports and recreational activities?	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
9.6 Your access to artistic and cultural activities?	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
9.7 Your access to activities to develop skills through informal education?	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied

9.8 How often do you feel uncomfortable or out of place in your neighborhood because of your ethnicity, culture, race, skin color, language, accent, gender, sexual orientation, or religion?

Never	Rarely	Some of the time	Most of the time	All of the time
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Section 10: Your Neighborhood

Here is another list of things which people indicate are desirable to them in deciding where to live. Please indicate your desirable each item is to have near where you live.

In your neighborhood or community, how **IMPORTANT** is it for you to have...

10.1 Public transportation which is safe, clean and frequent?	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
10.2 A quiet and peaceful neighborhood?	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
10.3 A quality environment (like clean air and water)?	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
10.4 A safe place to live?	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
10.5 Good police and fire protection, governmental services, garbage collection?	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
10.6 Affordable housing?	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
10.7 Well-paying job opportunities?	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
10.8 Health services like doctors, hospitals and clinics?	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important

In your neighborhood or community, how **SATISFIED** are you with...

10.9 Your access to public transportation which is safe, clean and frequent?	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
10.10 The quietness and peacefulness of your neighborhood?	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
10.11 The quality of your environment (like clean air and water)?	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
10.12 The safety of where you live?	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
10.13 The quality of your police and fire protection, governmental services, garbage collection?	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
10.14 Your access to affordable housing?	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied

10.15 Your access to well-paying job opportunities?	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
10.16 Your access to health services like doctors, hospitals and clinics?	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied

Section 11: Environmental Quality

11.1 How healthy is your physical environment?

Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
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Please rate your level of satisfaction

11.2 How satisfied are you with the efforts being made to preserve the natural environment in your neighborhood?	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
11.3 How satisfied are you with the opportunities that you have to enjoy nature?	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
11.4 How satisfied are you with the air quality in your environment?	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
10.5 How satisfied are you with the natural quality of your neighborhood?	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied

Section 12: Government

12.1 How satisfied are you with the job being done by the local government officials of your city or town?

Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
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State your level of agreement with the following statements.

12.2 Corruption is widespread throughout the government in my city or town.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
12.3 The public officials in my city or town pay attention to what people think.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
12.4 People in my city or town	Strongly	Disagree	Neither agree	Agree	Strongly

can influence their public officials.	disagree		nor disagree		agree
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Please indicate how much confidence you have in the following organizations:

12.5 Local government	No confidence	Not very much confidence	A fair amount of confidence	Quite a lot of confidence	A great deal of confidence
12.6 National government	No confidence	Not very much confidence	A fair amount of confidence	Quite a lot of confidence	A great deal of confidence

Section 13: Material Well-Being

13.1 In general, how stressed do you feel about your personal finances?

Overwhelming stress	High stress	Moderate stress	Low stress	No stress at all
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13.2 How frequently do you find yourself just getting by financially and living paycheck to paycheck?

All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
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Please indicate how frequently you have had the following experiences in the past 12 months.

13.3 You could not pay bills (water or phone bill, credit card, etc.) on time.	At least once a month	At least once every three months	At least once every six months	Once in the last year	Never
13.4 You ate less because there wasn't enough food or money for food.	At least once a month	At least once every three months	At least once every six months	Once in the last year	Never

To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

13.5 I have enough money to buy things I want.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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Section 14: Work

14.1 Regarding employment, which of the following options best describe your current work life?

A full time employee	A part time employee	Working independently / self-employed
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A volunteer at an organization	Unemployed looking for work	Retired
Homemaker	Student or in training	Other

14.2 If “Other” please specify:

Please answer the following questions about your satisfaction with your current working situation.

14.3 All things considered, how satisfied are you with your current work life? (Note: if you work or volunteer at more than one job, you should answer about the job you spend the longest time working at.)	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
14.4 How satisfied are you with the balance between the time you spend on your job and the time you spend on other aspects of your life?	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied

14.5 How much of the time do you find your current work life interesting?

Very rarely or never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often or always
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Please state your level of agreement with each of these statements.

14.6 The conditions of my job allow me to be about as productive as I could be.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
14.7 Considering all my efforts and achievements in my job I feel I get paid appropriately	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
14.8 I am allowed to decide how to go about getting my job done.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

Demographics

What is your current age (please enter a whole number of years, e.g., 35)? _____

Which gender do you identify as? (multiple selections are allowed)

Male	Female	Neither	Other (If “other”, please specify)
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What race[s] or ethnicity[s] do you identify as? (categories are taken from the 2010 U.S. Census, and multiple selections are allowed)

White non-Hispanic	Japanese
Hispanic	Korean
Black, African American, or Negro	Vietnamese
American Indian or Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian
Asian Indian	Guamanian or Chamorro
Chinese	Samoan
Filipino	Other Pacific Islander — Specify race, e.g., Fijian, Tongan, etc.
Other Asian — Specify race, e.g. Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Pakistani, Cambodian, etc.	Some other race — Specify race.

What is your current marital status?

Married	Never married or in a domestic partnership	Separated
Domestic partnership	Divorced	Widowed
Other:		

What is your current housing situation?

Single person living alone	Living with spouse or partner (no children at home)	Living in child's home
Single person living with others	Living with spouse or partner and children at home	Homeless
Single person with children at home	Living in parents' home	Other (please specify):

How many people currently reside in your household? _____

Do you have any children under 18? Yes No

Where do you live? (we just want a postal code and country – not your exact address)

Which of these categories comes closest to the type of place you are living in today?

In open country but not on a farm	On a farm	In a small city or town (under 50,000)	In a medium-size city (50,000 – 250,000)	In a suburb of a large city	In a large city (over 250,000)
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The next two questions assess your current spirituality.

How spiritual do you consider yourself to be?	Not at all	Not very	Somewhat	Moderately	Very
How important are your spiritual beliefs to the way you live your life?	Not at all	Not very	Somewhat	Moderately	Very

If you live in the United States, please answer the following 3 questions to the best of your ability

About fiscal and monetary policy, where would you put yourself?

Extremely conservative	Conservative	Slightly conservative	Moderate, middle of the road	Slightly liberal	Liberal	Extremely liberal
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About social policy, such as gay marriage or a woman's choice of abortion, where would you put yourself?

Extremely conservative	Conservative	Slightly conservative	Moderate, middle of the road	Slightly liberal	Liberal	Extremely liberal
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Thinking about political orientations, what affiliation do you identify with most?

Republican	Democrat	Independent	Green	Libertarian	Tea Party	Other
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What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

Less than grade 9	More than grade 9 but less than grade 12	Grade 12 / High school diploma
Skills training and/or apprenticeship	Some college	Undergraduate university degree (e.g. a BA)
Graduate university degree (e.g. a Master's)		

What was your total household income from all sources last year?

Less than \$10,000	\$10,000 - \$19,999	\$20,000 - \$29,999
\$30,000 - \$39,999	\$40,000 - \$49,999	\$50,000 - \$74,999
\$75,000 - \$99,999	\$100,000 - \$124,999	\$125,000 or more

Wealth is defined as the total value of everything someone owns minus any debt that he or she owes. A person's net wealth includes his or her bank account or cash savings plus the value of other things such as stocks, bonds, retirement accounts, the value of your primary residence and vacation property, art, collections, etc., minus the value of things like home-equity loans, student loans, credit card debt, and mortgages. **What would you estimate your household's total net wealth is at this time?**

Less than \$10,000	\$10,000 - \$24,999	\$25,000 - \$49,999
\$50,000 - \$74,999	\$75,000 - \$99,999	\$100,000 - \$149,999
\$150,000 - \$249,999	\$250,000 - \$499,999	\$500,000 or more

In the last six months, how often have you made late payments to your creditors?

Never (you have made 0 late payments)	Rarely (you have made 1 late payment)	Sometimes (you have made 2-3 late payments)	Most of the time (you have made 4-6 late payments)	Frequently (you have made more than 6 late payments)
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If you needed \$1,000 for an unplanned expense, what would you do to obtain the money?

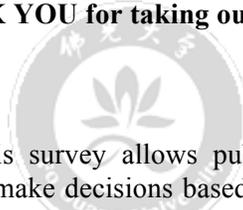
I would take the money out of my bank account	I would get a cash advance on my credit card
I would borrow the money from friends or family	I would sell or pawn some assets
I would take out a loan	I would disregard some other expense (i.e. not pay something else that month)
Other (please write in):	

Do you have any comments or questions about any of the items used in this survey?

May we contact you in future for follow-up research? If so, please enter your email address here. _____

The End

THANK YOU for taking our survey!



The data we are gathering with this survey allows public policy makers, communities and individuals to measure progress and make decisions based on a comprehensive understanding of our needs, what we care about and where we are thriving or hurting. We hope it will be a starting point for a conversation about using wider measures of happiness, wellbeing and sustainability instead of just Gross Domestic Product or money.

To learn more about this project and how to get involved, see www.happycounts.org

Appendix C: Charts

Chart 1.1

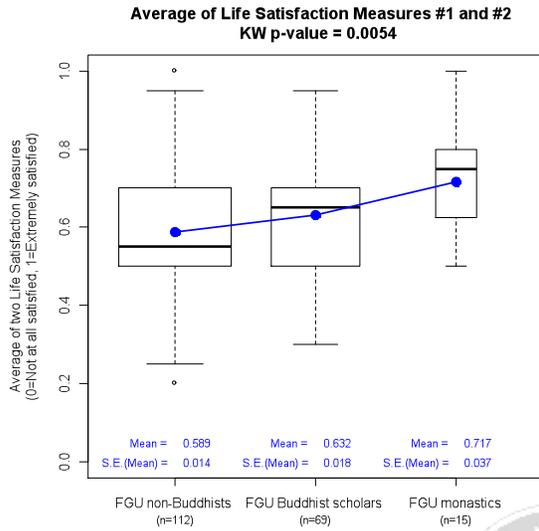


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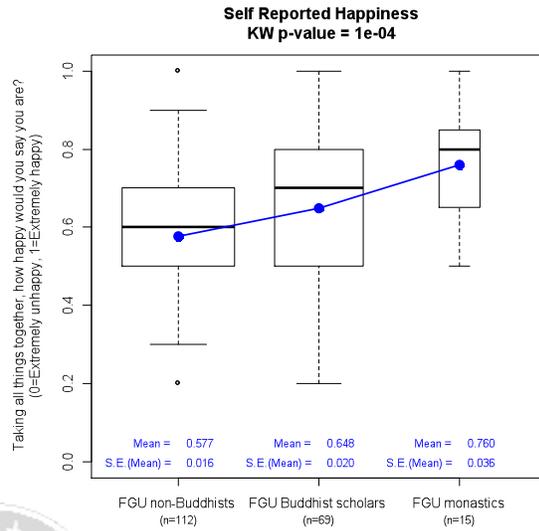


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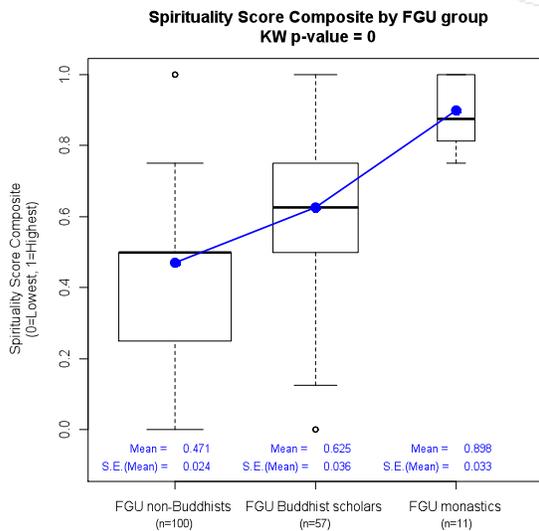


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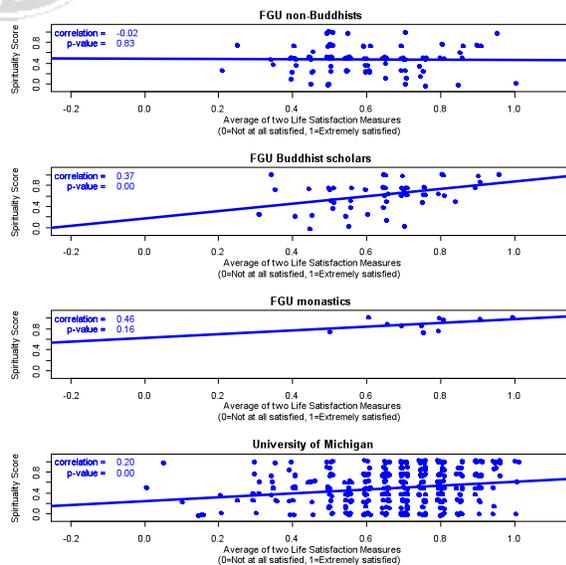


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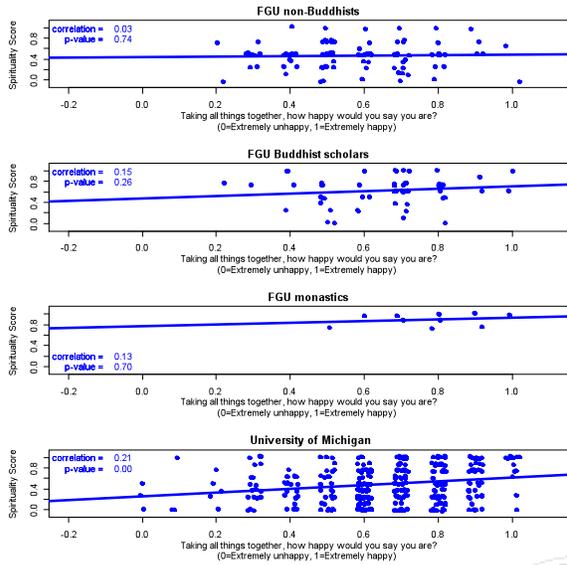


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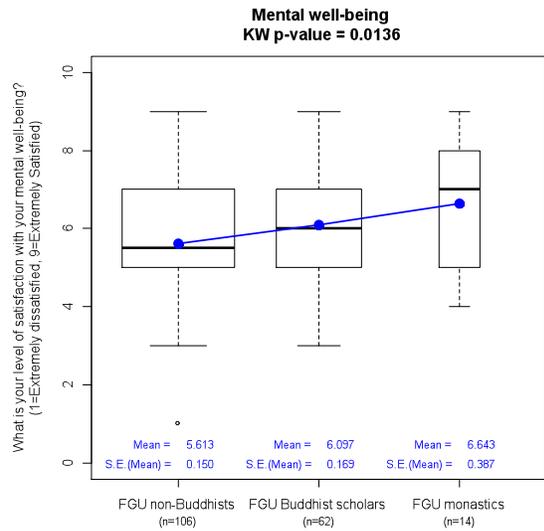


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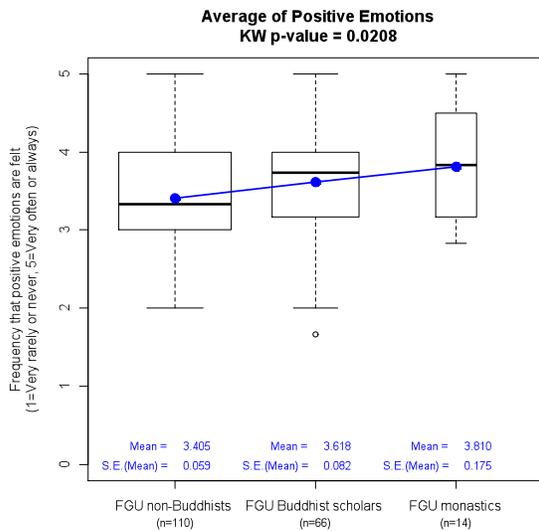


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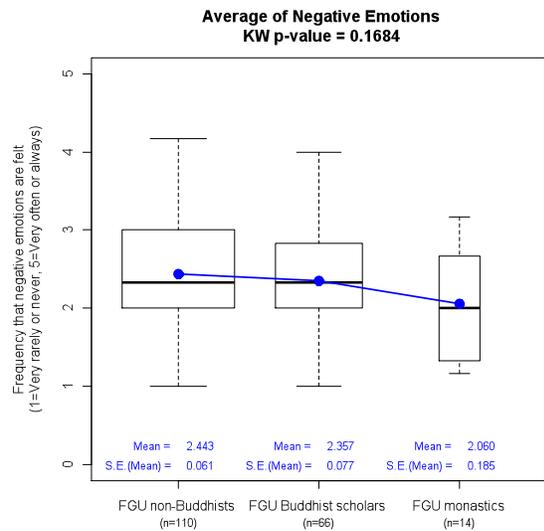


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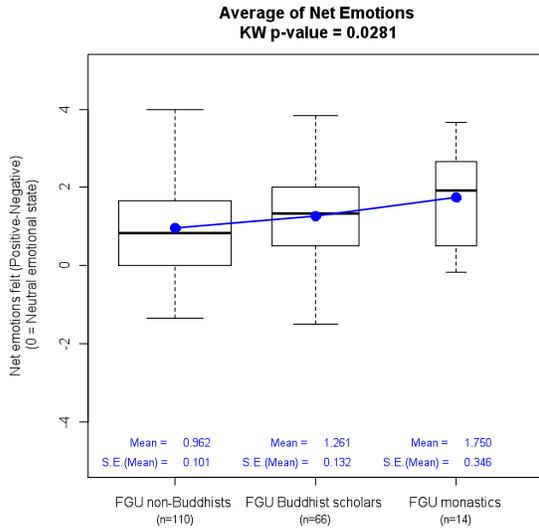


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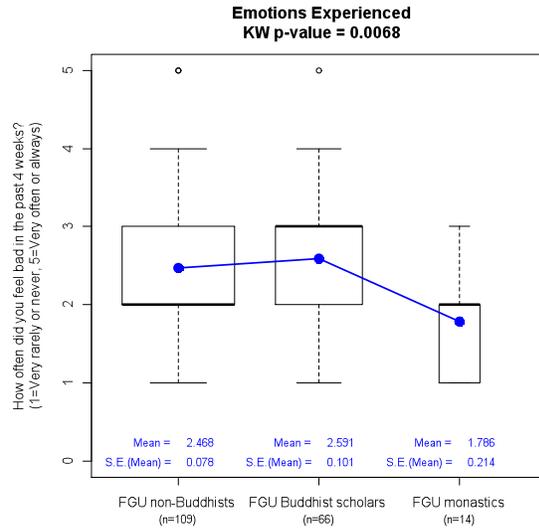


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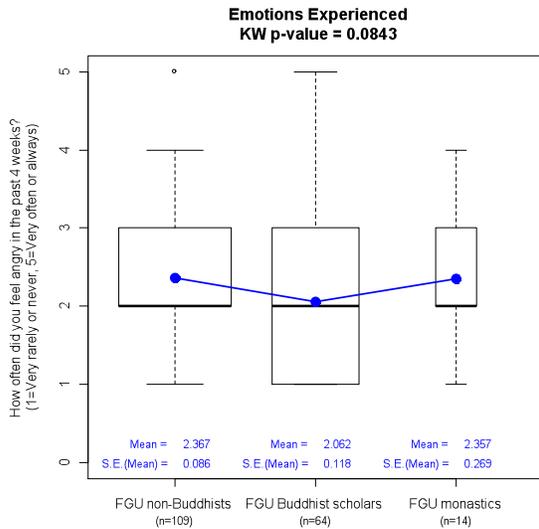


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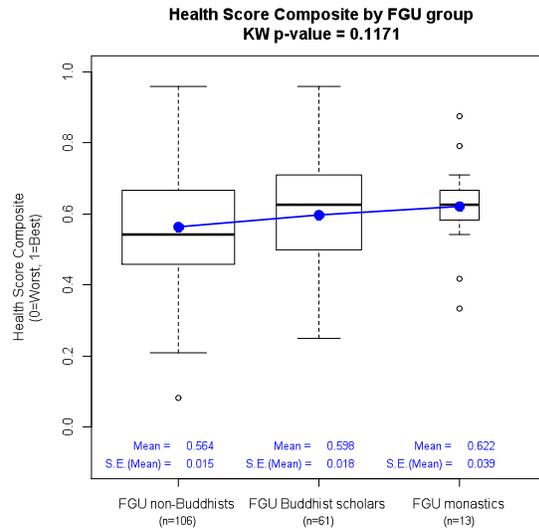


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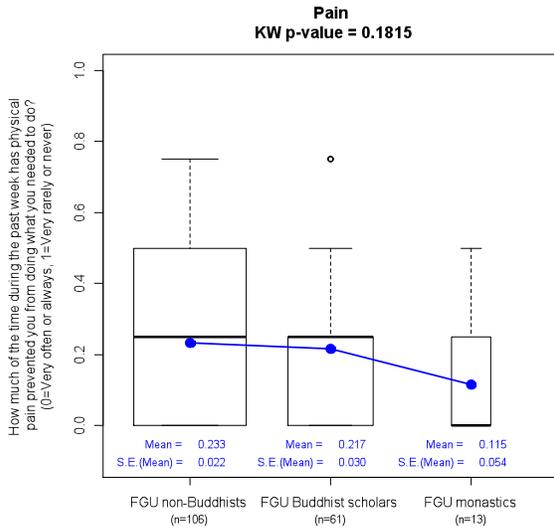


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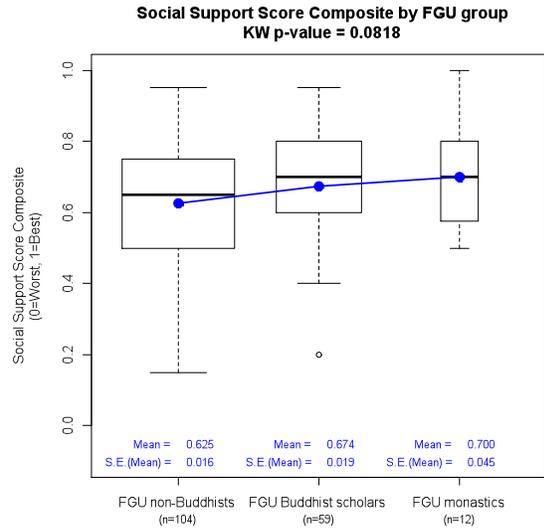


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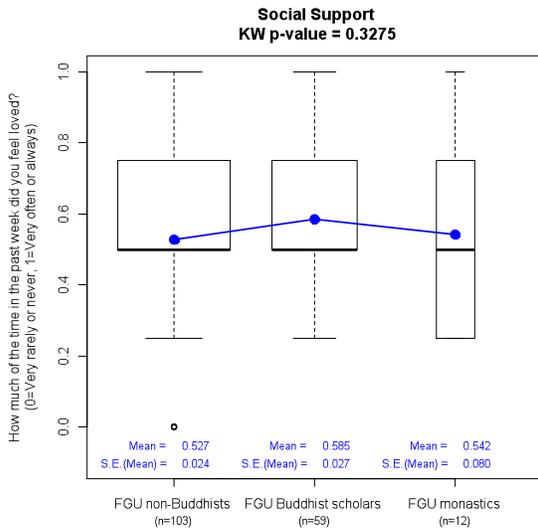


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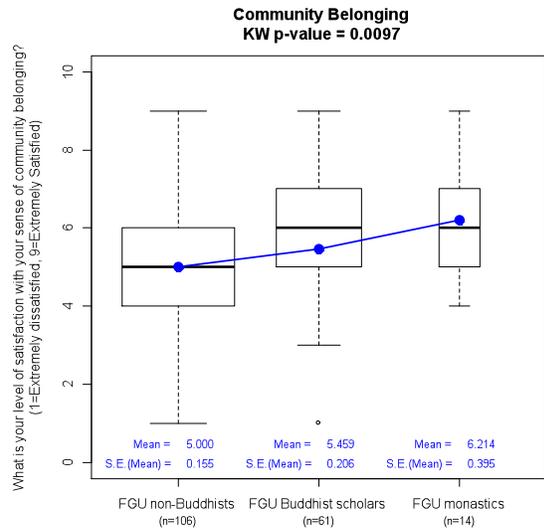


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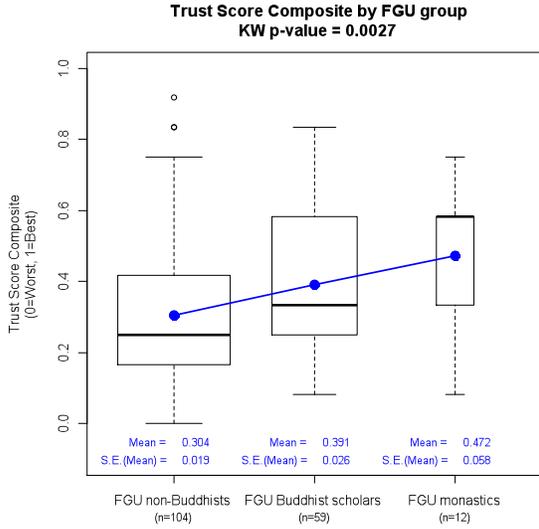


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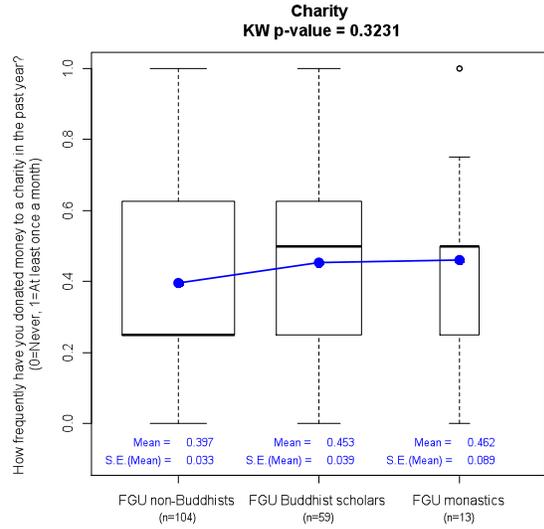


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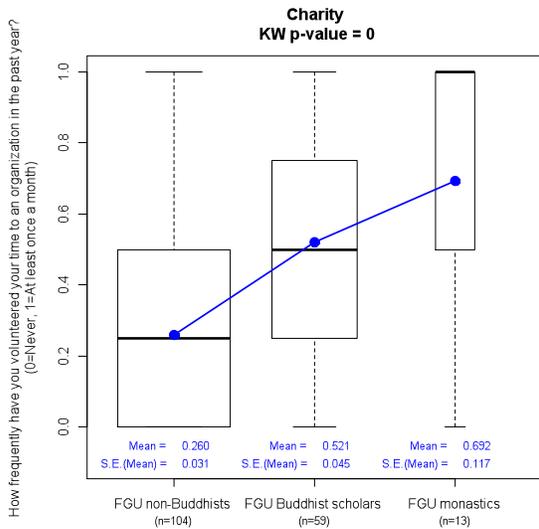


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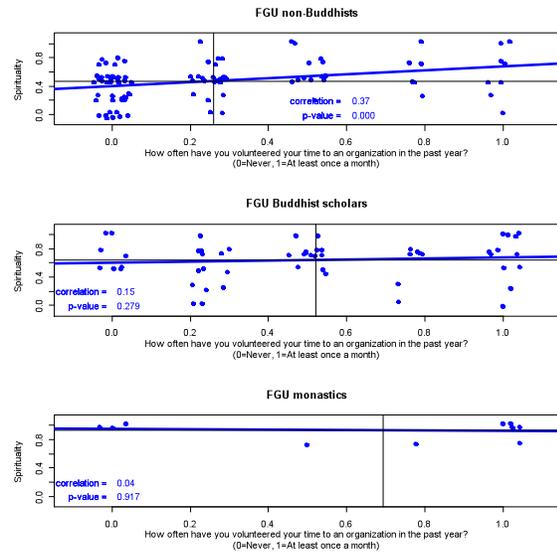


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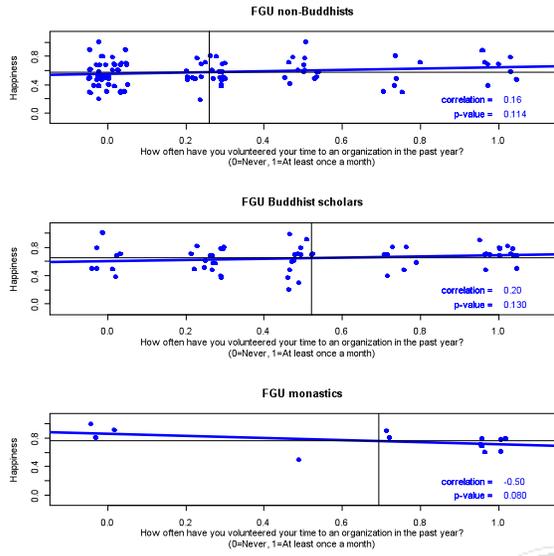


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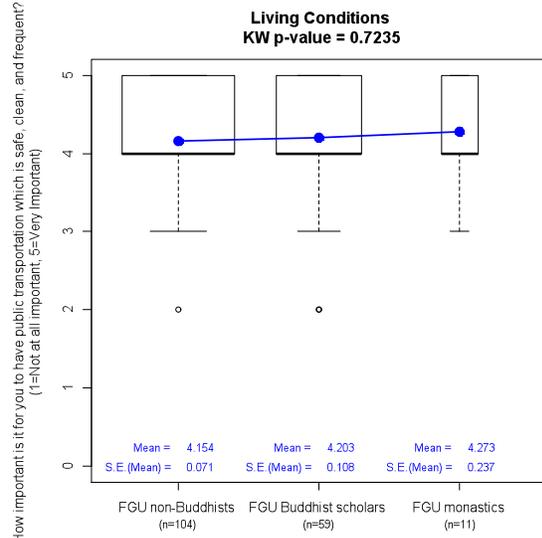


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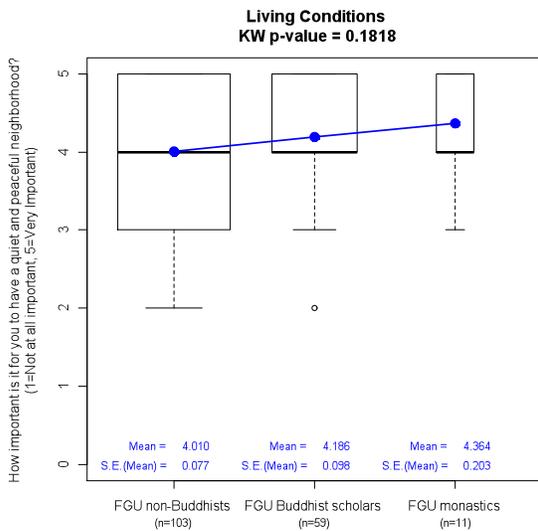


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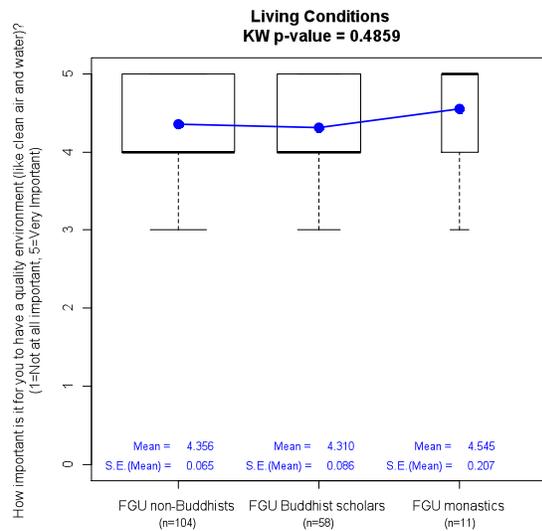


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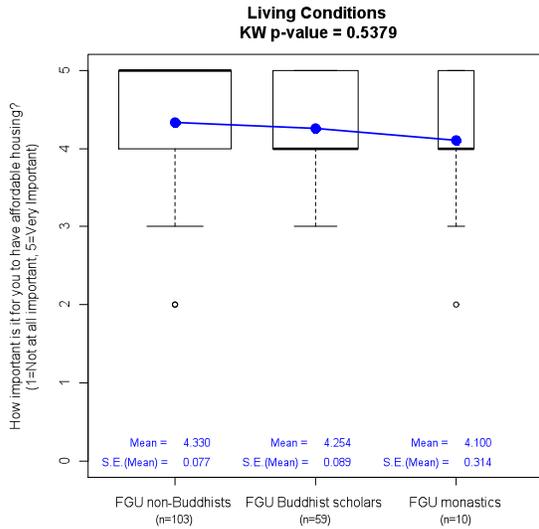


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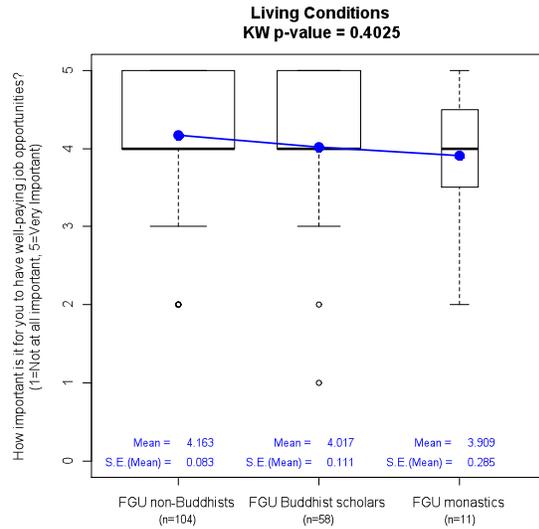


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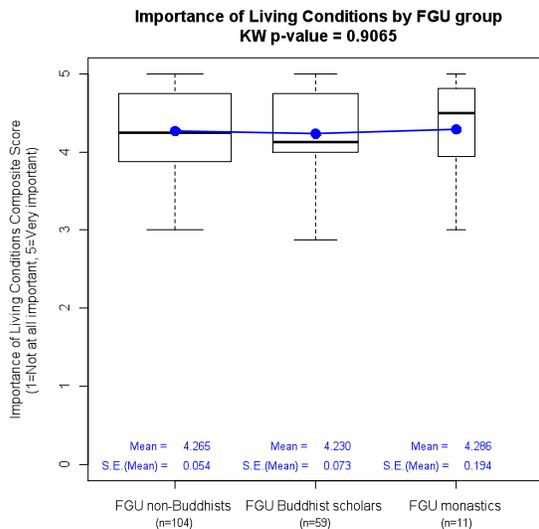


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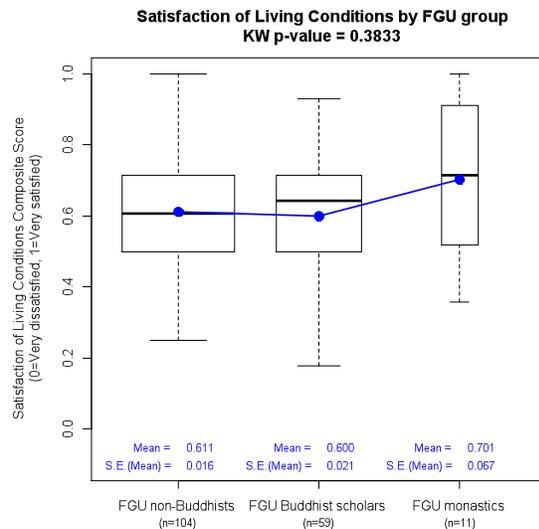


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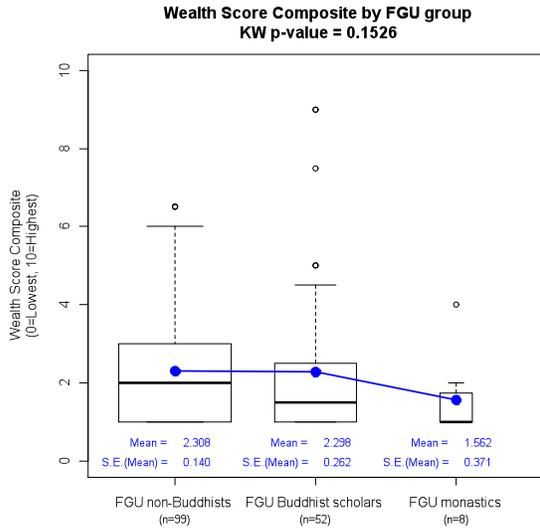


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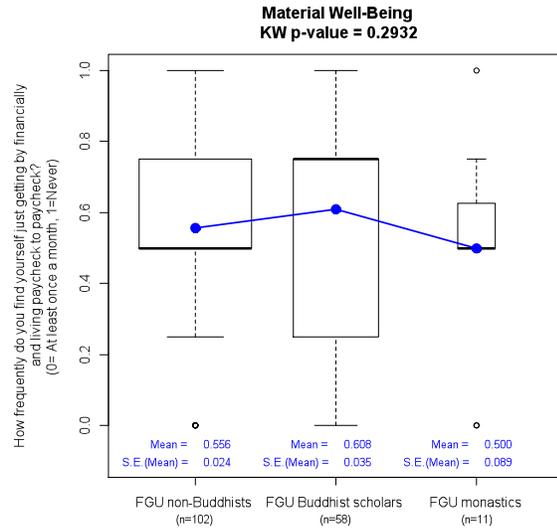


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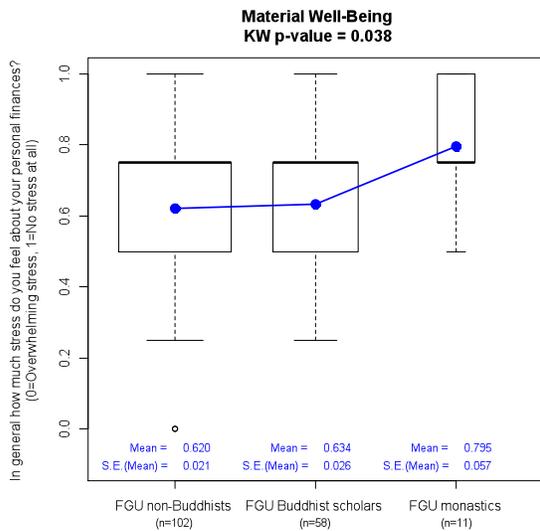


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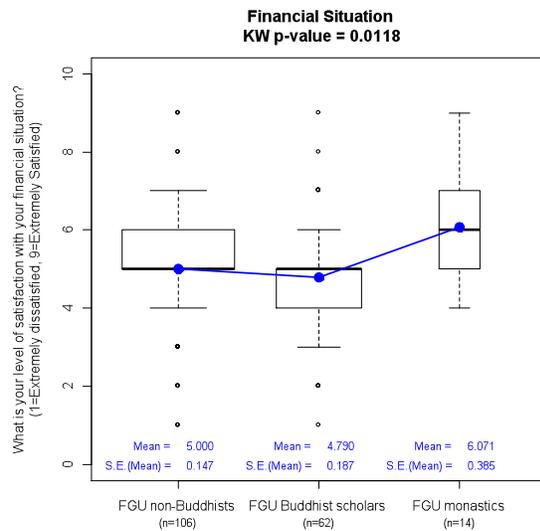


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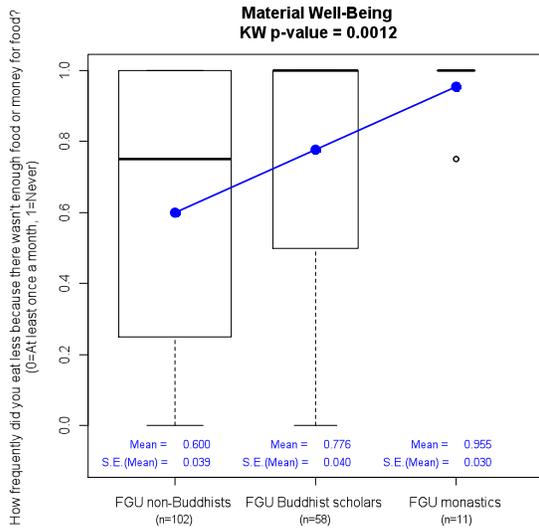


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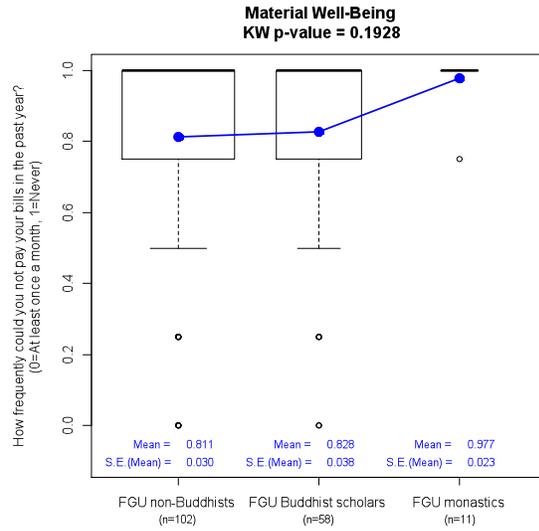


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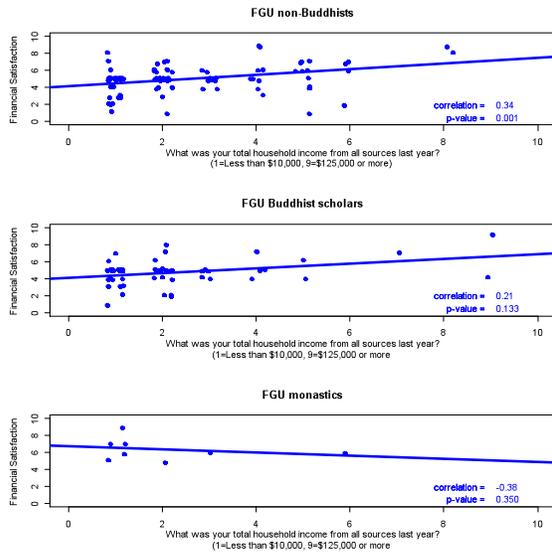


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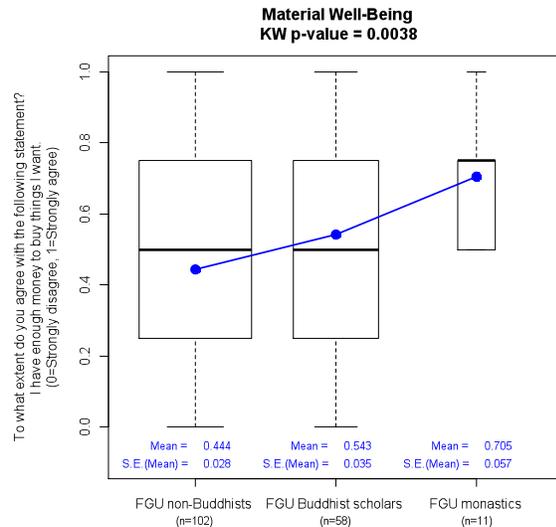


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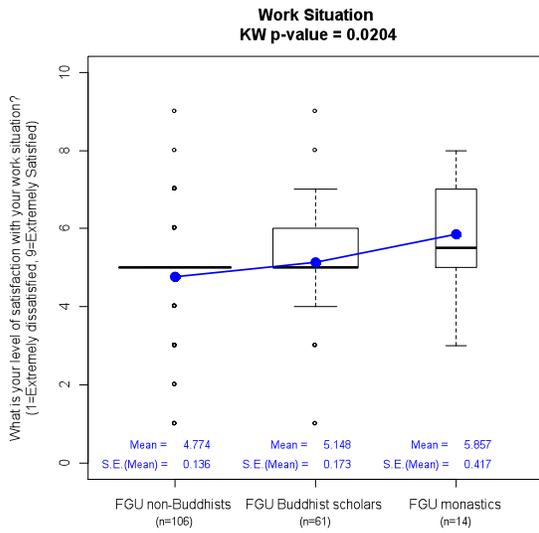


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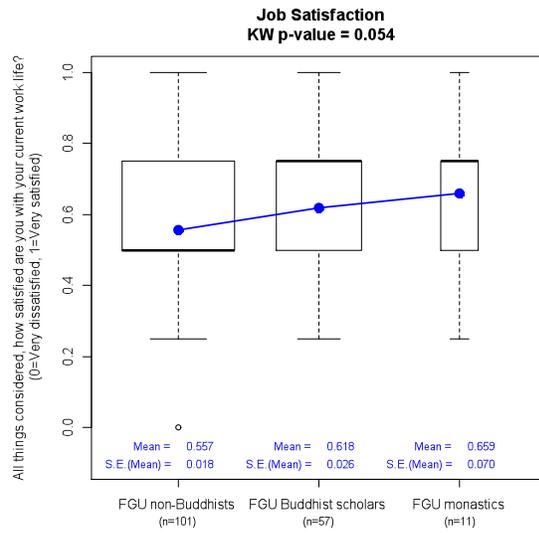


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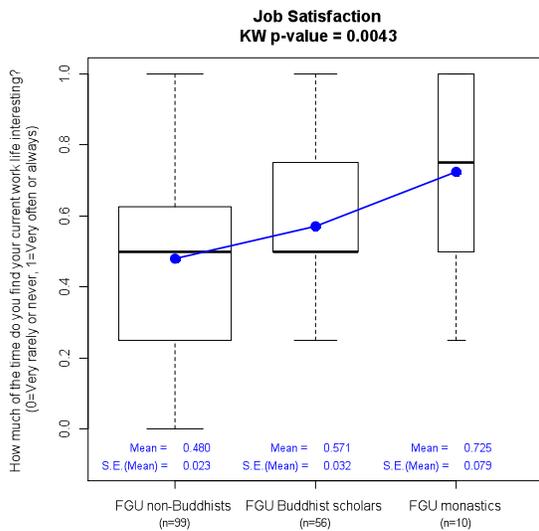


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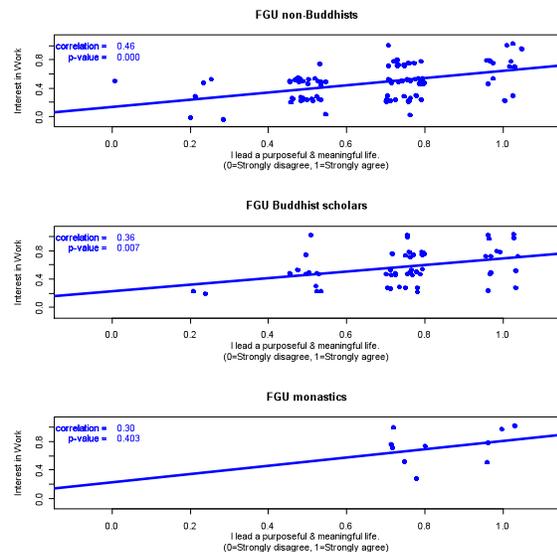


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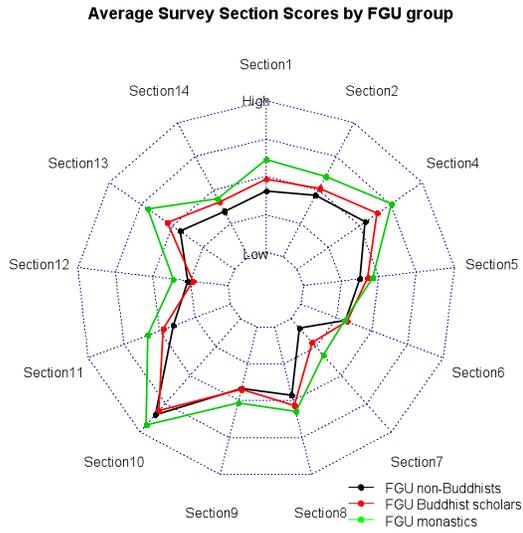


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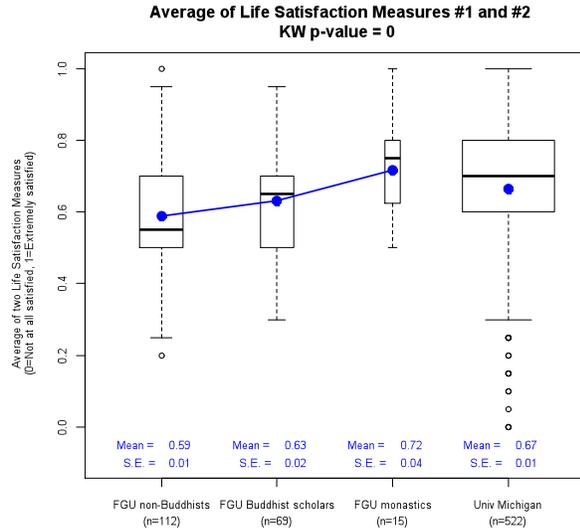


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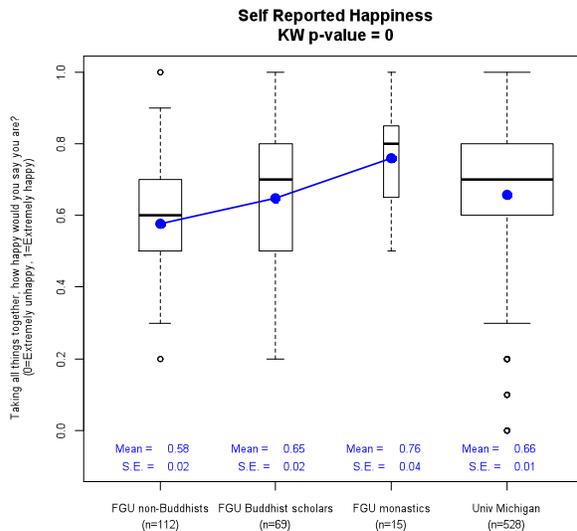


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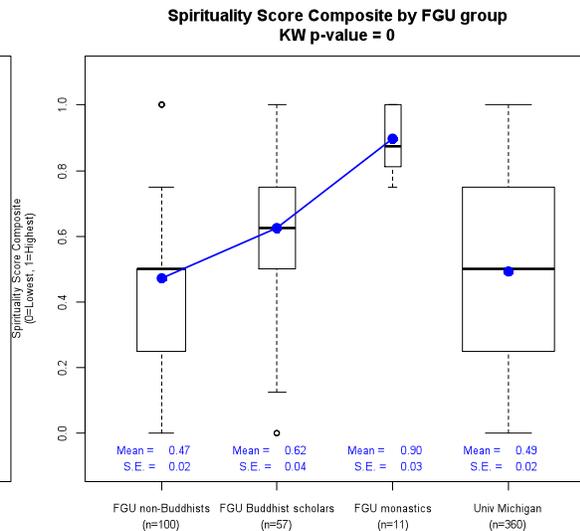


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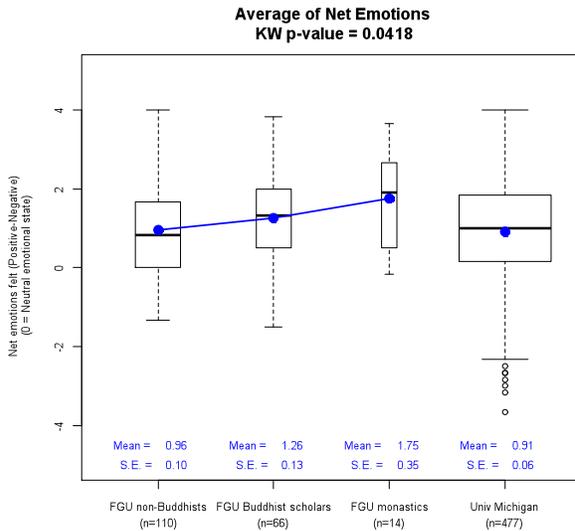


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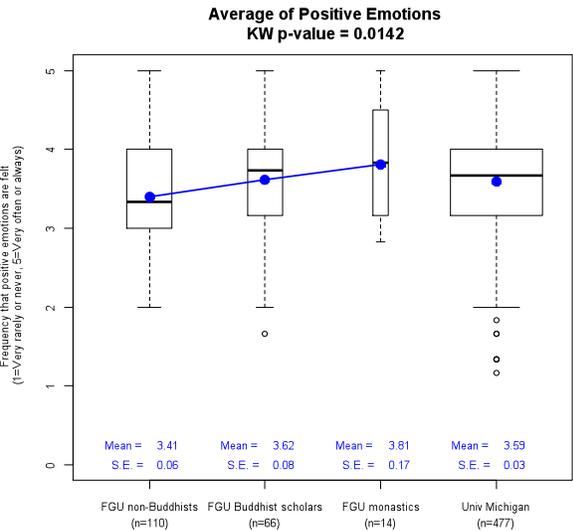


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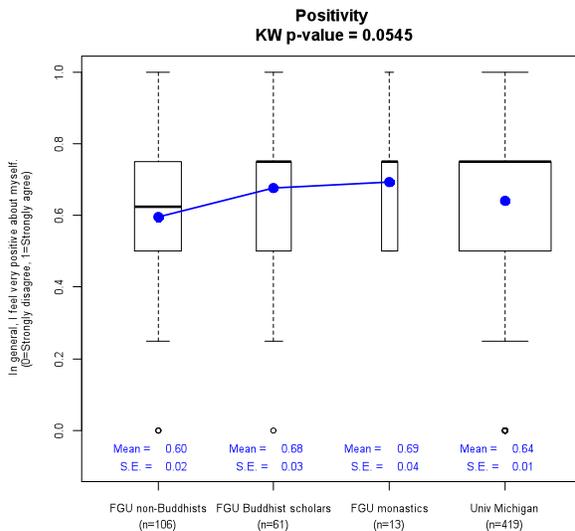


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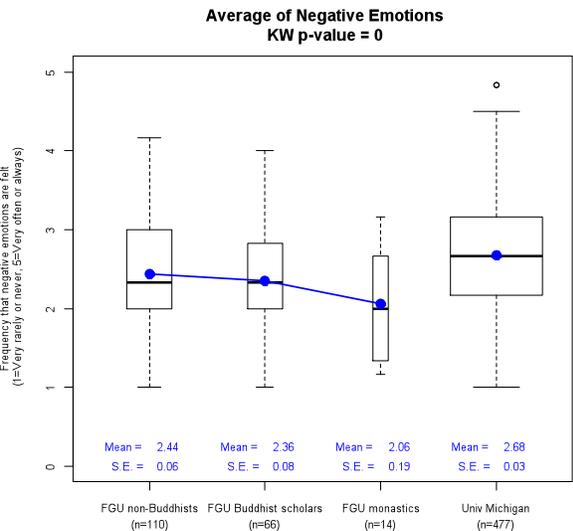


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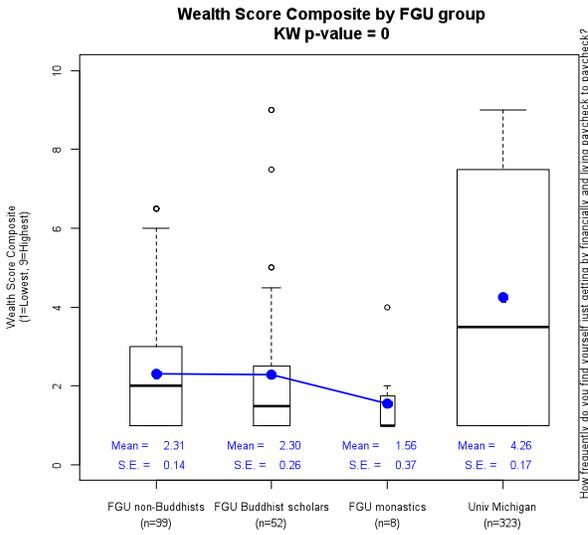


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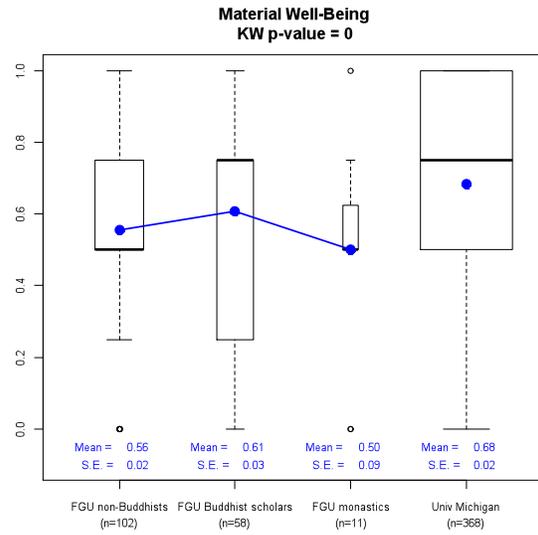


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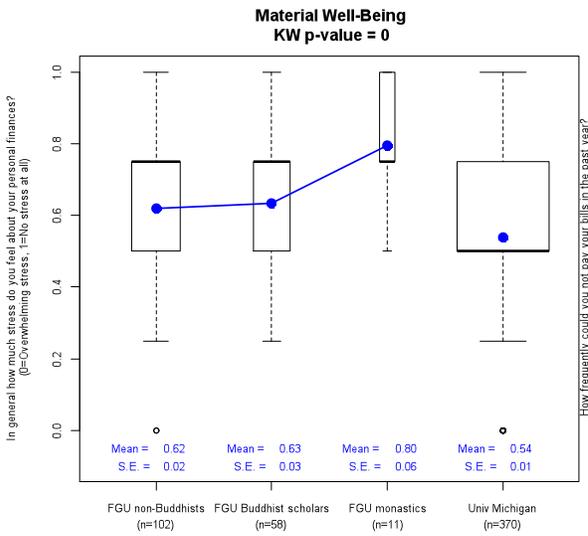


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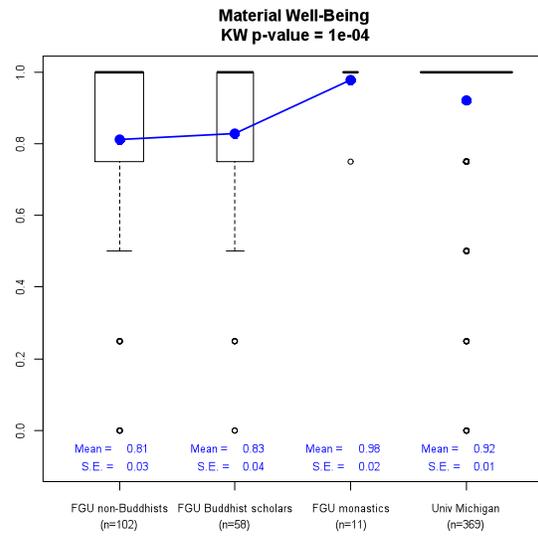


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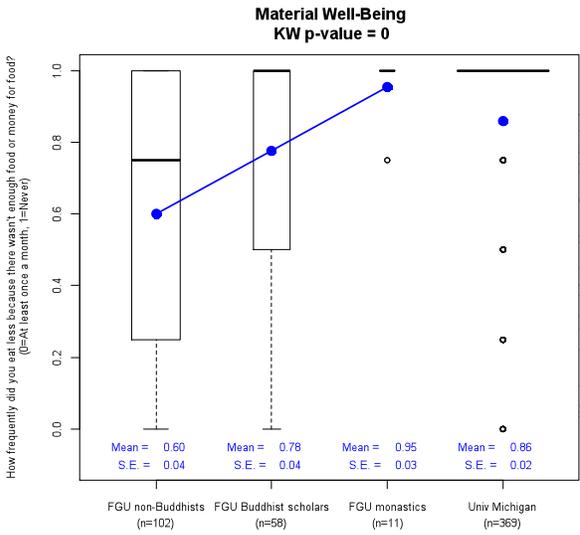


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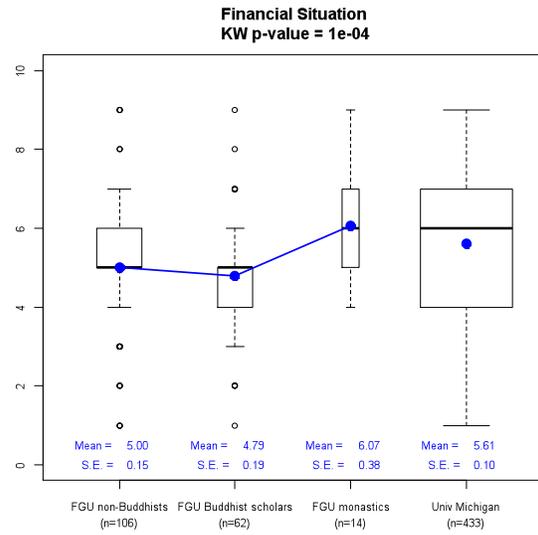


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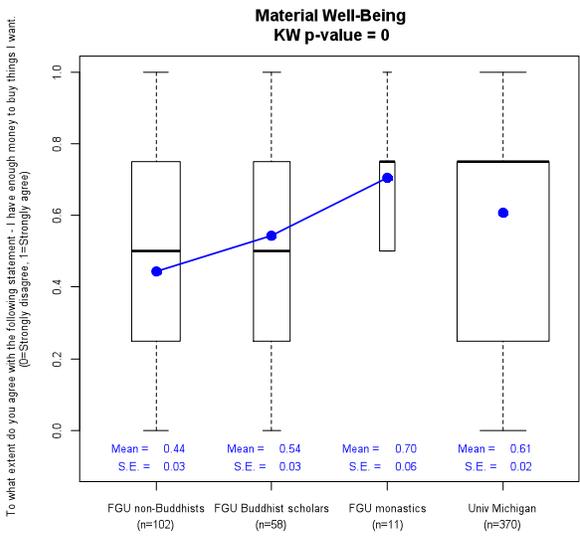


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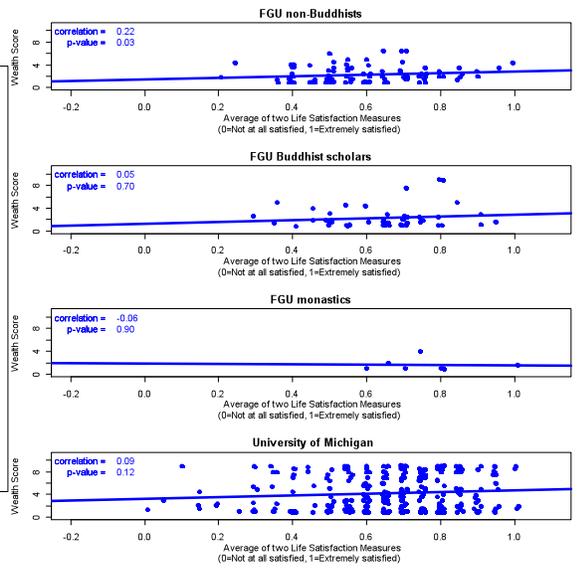


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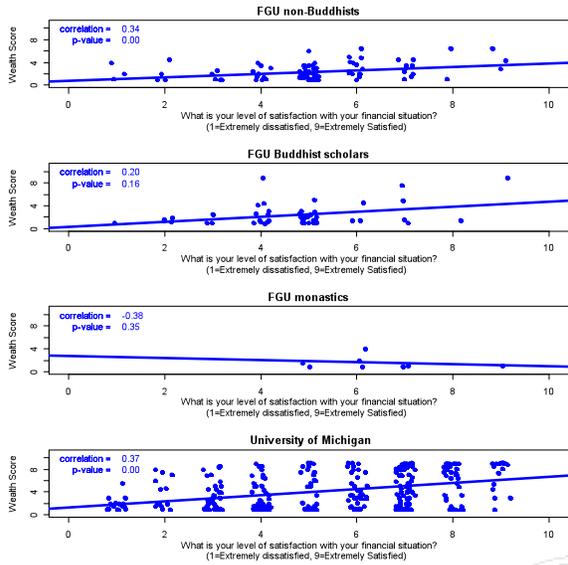


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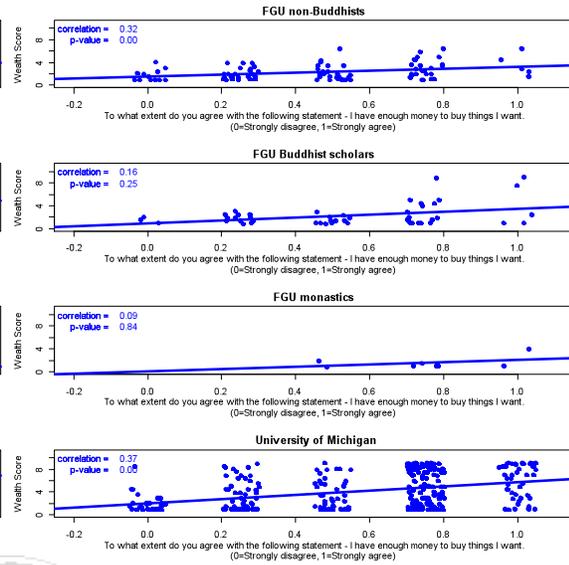


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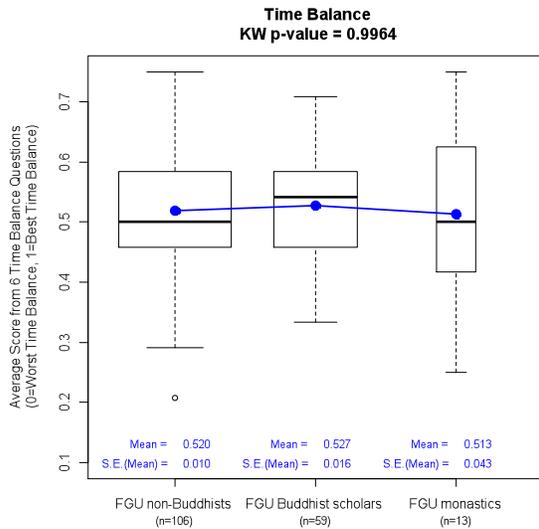


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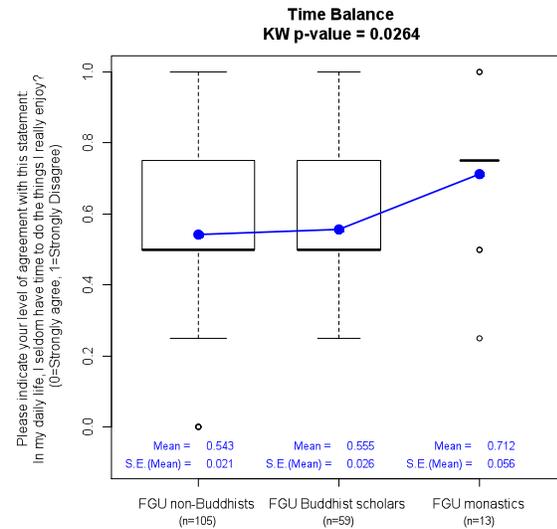


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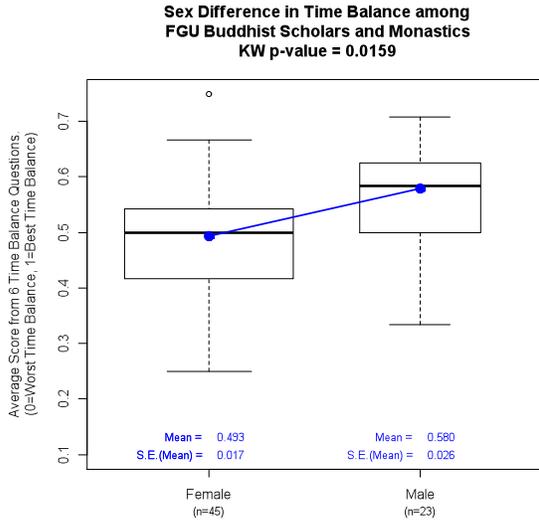


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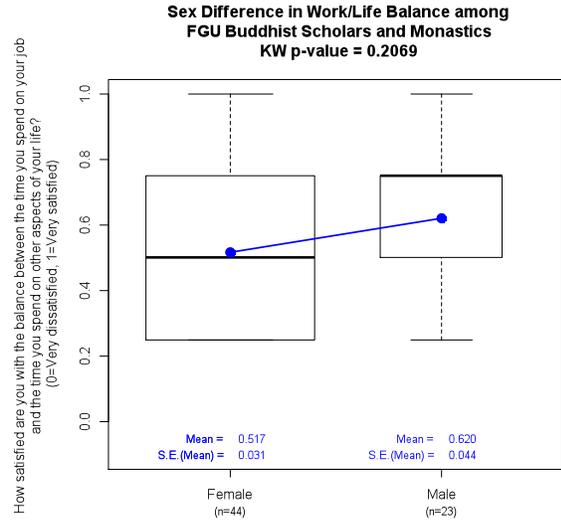


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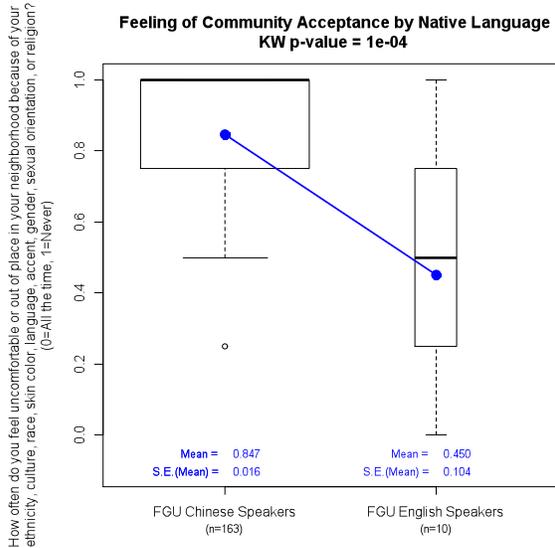


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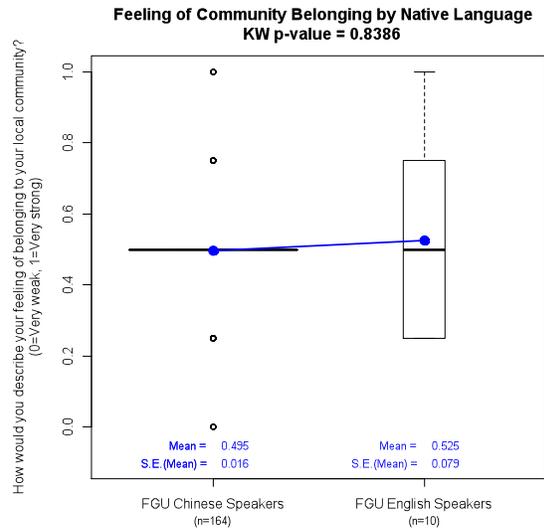


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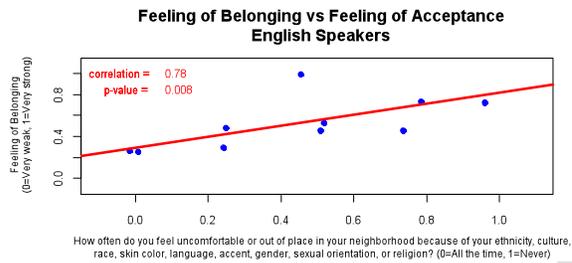
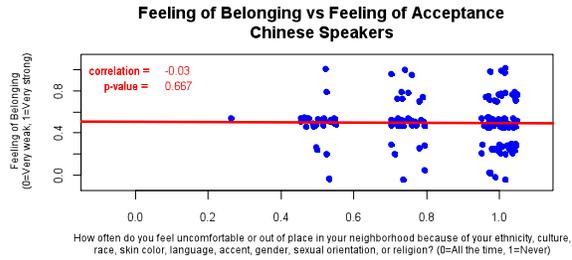


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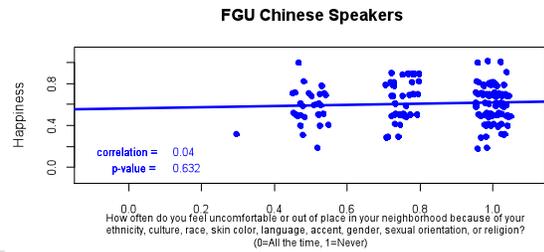
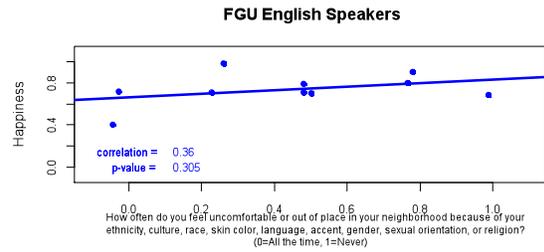


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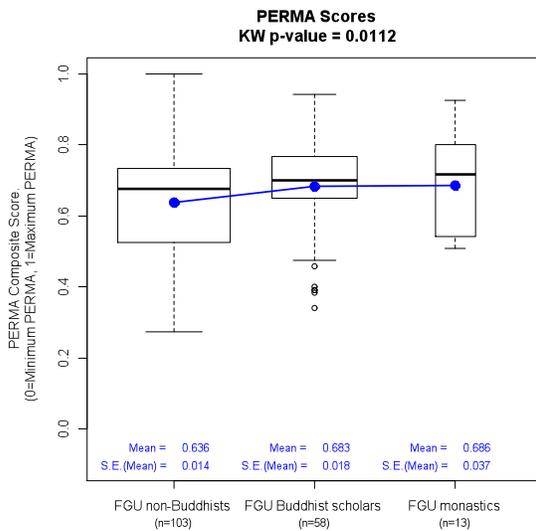


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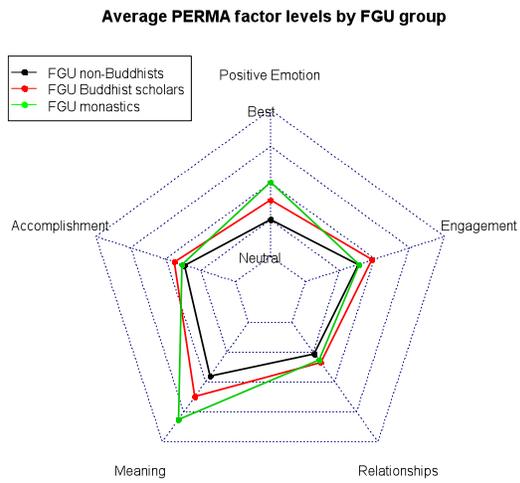


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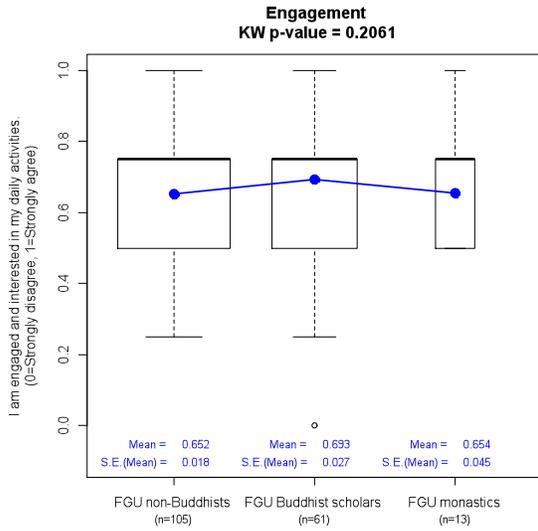


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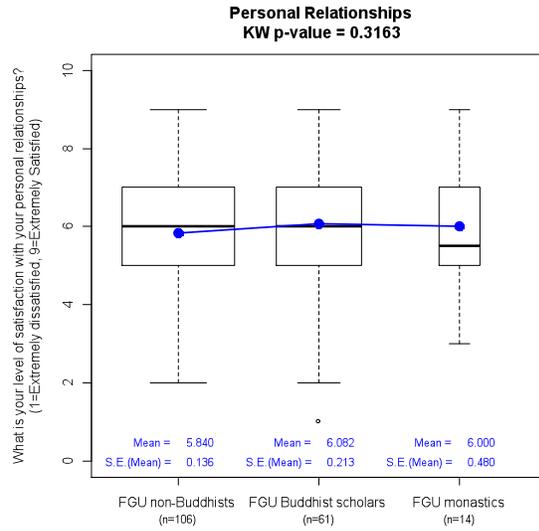


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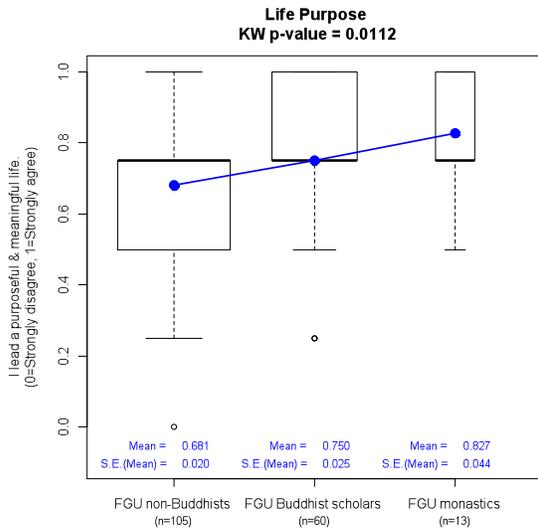
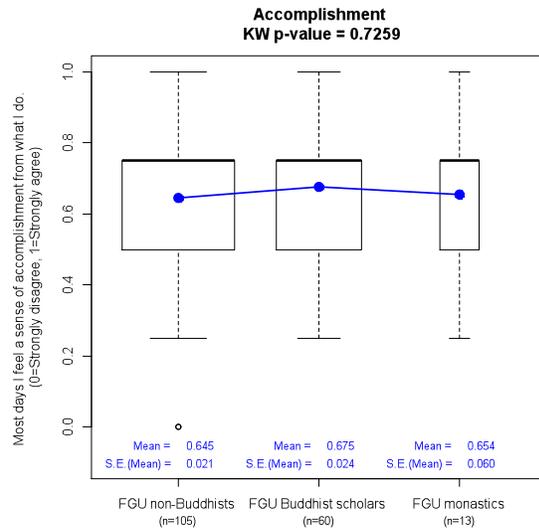


Chart 13.6



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