

Buddhist Insights into Life and Death: Overcoming Death Anxiety

*By Fung Kei Cheng**

Death anxiety devastates emotional well-being and may produce suicidal ideations, thus lowering life satisfaction. Although much literature suggests that religion reduces this fear, their direct correlation remains controversial. The present case study investigates how a Buddhist perceives life and death, and how she copes with death anxiety through Buddhist teachings and practices. Using multiple first-hand sources, it analyses data through an interpretative phenomenological analysis. It also adopts peer analysis to increase academic rigour, attaining an inter-rater reliability of 93%. Findings reveal that the law of dependent origination, karma, cause-and-effect, and the cycle of life and re-birth expound on the phenomenal reality, giving hope, and producing peace when facing death. Despite the fact that a single case does not aim at generalisation, research outcomes shed light on helping professionals who equip themselves with a wider range of worldviews and life views in order to enhance their professional skills.

Keywords: *Case study, Cause-and-effect, Cycle of death and re-birth, Karma, Law of dependent origination.*

Introduction

Life and death coexist inseparably (Wong 2008), living predicts inevitably dying. However, they are treated differently. Most people are reluctant to discuss the latter, as it emotionally, cognitively, and experientially yields anxiety (Lehto and Stein 2009), and thus they tend to deny it (Loy 1996). The fear of death connected with oneself and loved ones negatively correlates with psychological wellness and life satisfaction (Iverach et al. 2014, Shukla and Rishi 2014), particularly in people with emotional problems (Kaur and Yadav 2009). This likely produces medically unexplained somatic symptoms (Sharpe 2013), reflecting the association between physical and mental health, and also implying the implicit influence of death anxiety over health.

Religion elicits the issues of death and of what will happen after death, both of which generate uncertainties and fear (Moore and Williamson 2003); nevertheless, different religions offer various solutions. For example, Christian believes state hell and heaven which link confession and repentance; Buddhism claims the cycle of death and rebirth, and the ultimate destination of absolute liberation; and Muslims look forward to the Day of Judgement. Although research reports little significant connection between religion and death anxiety (Chuin and Choo 2000, Latha et al. 2013), a myriad of studies indicate that religious faith can diminish fear (Jorajuria et al. 2003, Kasternbaum n.d., Lee

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et al. 2013, Roshani 2012, Wen 2010), because it gives hope of an afterlife (Soenke et al. 2013), as explained earlier. Dezutter and the research team (2009) conducted a mixed-method study with 471 respondents from 17 to 91 years old, among whom 80.9% declared themselves as religious followers. Outcomes showed that religious believers accepted the idea of the afterlife more likely than non-religious people. However, the attitudes towards death varied from age and health status, reflecting a multidimensional model to examine the relationship of religiosity and death attitude. Professionals of death education may devise programmes to accommodate the needs of different age groups, in respect of dealing with life and the afterlife. In addition to these findings, Krause (2011) reported the correlation of religious meaning in life and death anxiety among older adults, influencing their psychological well-being. Thus, this proposed an enhancement in measuring religious meaning in life in a more comprehensive perspective. Such psychometric instrument will give references to scholars and practitioners who serve the elderly to take care of spiritual wellness in their late stage of life. Religious coping can reduce such stress, as elaborated on previously, for which Buddhism offers alternative views, enabling an individual to cope with this dread more comfortably (McCormick 2013) caused by Buddhist views of world and life which will be illuminated by the participant of this research.

Developed by the Buddha over 2,500 years ago in India, Buddhism helps human beings alleviate suffering, especially for psychological afflictions, for which the Buddha preached for 49 years and demonstrated how he could achieve liberation from tribulations. Buddhism provides people with a set of practices to handle life difficulties (Cheng 2015c), including a variety of meditation. After his death, Buddhism has evolved three mainstreams: Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna (Tantric Buddhism). Theravāda pays strong attention to personal achievements for extinguishing suffering, that is, *nibbāna* (perfect stillness). Rooted in the fundamental theories, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna are comparatively committed to altruistic behaviour (Cheng 2015a, Cheng 2015b, Cheng 2015d). Regardless of the diverse focal tenets of these traditions, they share a common consent about the transcendence of death.

For Buddhists, life is considered to be not only a process (Bernhard 2010), but more importantly a "vast process of becoming" (Corbett-Hemeyer 2005: 8140) with an unceasing cycle of living and dying, implying that individuals experience death innumerable times, either in the past or in the future (Keown 2005). It is also a "psycho-physical combination" (Gunaratna 2001: 9) in which happiness and inevitable suffering react and interact within this cycle, which is neutral in nature and is not associated with either positive or negative premises (Rahula 2001). Optimistic or pessimistic reactions depend on individual perception. Optimistic people consider that felicity and distress enrich their lives; in contrast, pessimistic people worry about the loss of joy and the presence of misery, because of which they produce anxiety and unease. Depending on the individual response to reality, it becomes possible to transcend suffering (Mizuno 2003) and subdue death anxiety, when a person successfully searches for meaning in life (Frankl 1946/2006) and subsequently

prepares to die well through letting go of death (Byock 1996). This manifests an invaluable "sanctity of life" (Perett 1996: 310). These hint at palliative care practitioners who can serve their clients and family members at a peaceful manner and may enable clients to face death calmly; hence, there is a growing trend of using Buddhist concepts in clinical fields (Kawamura 2000), as a Buddhist-based care approach (Tung 2010).

In spite of a fact that a substantial body of literature elucidates the Buddhist philosophy of death, limited research offers personal narratives of Buddhist attitudes towards death. The present qualitative research explores how Buddhism views living and dying, and how a Buddhist tackles death anxiety; from which researchers and practitioners who serve patients with terminal illnesses and their family caregivers may gain insight into carrying out their professionalism with alternative perspectives. It also details the research methods by multiple data sources, analyses the lived experience of the participants, and discusses implications of the findings.

Research Design

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Faculties, The University of Hong Kong. It posted an electronic advertisement through contact lists provided by an academic department. The selection criteria included: first, informants were over 18 years old; second, informants were Buddhists, regardless of Buddhist sects or denominations; and third, informants were emotionally stable to discuss death. Potential informants were invited to an initial meeting to have a full understanding of the research objectives and procedures. One participant was successfully recruited and signed an informed consent; because of which this project used a case study.

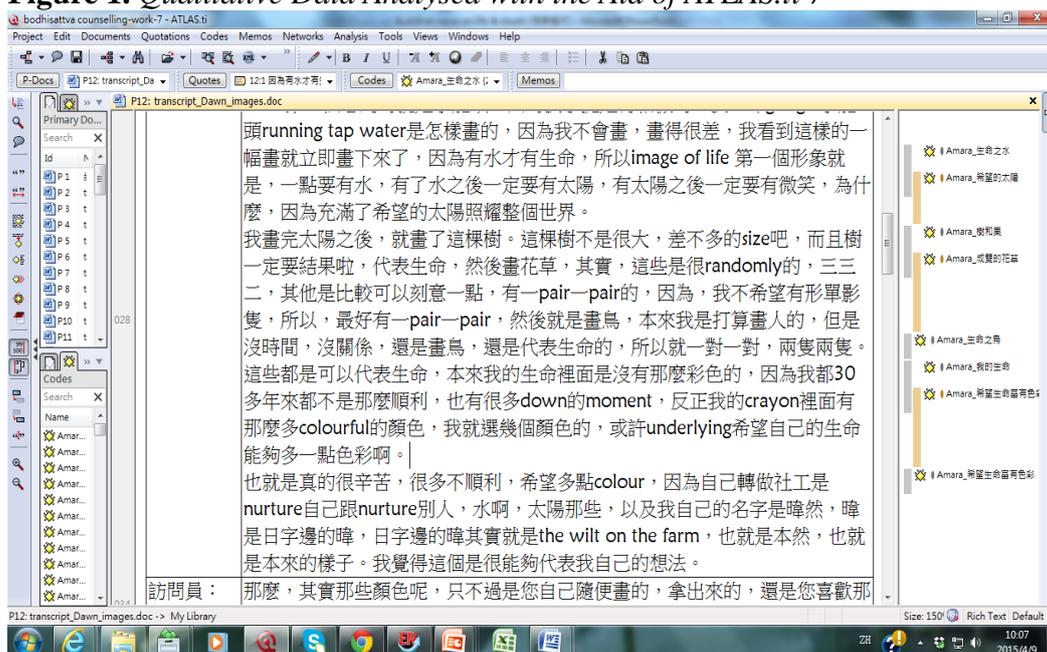
A case study is an empirical inquiry from which it examines a real-life phenomenon and provides first-hand, in-depth data to professionals for further exploration (Yin 2009), even though the number of cases is as small as a single case. The strengths of this qualitative method include a revelatory understanding of a specific phenomenon, a gain of insights from personal accounts of participants and an extension of investigative dimensions. In particular, a single case study potentially attains distinctive, unique, and strategic importance related to the general problem (Bramley and Eatough 2005, Flyvbjerg 2006), benefiting the theory-building process.

In using a single case study, insightful ideas are presented through the lived experience of the chosen participant (Yin 2009). In addition to face-to-face, individual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews (totally two sessions, 148 minutes), art making (Figures 3 and 4) was employed in this project to enrich the collected data. The interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed. The verbatim transcriptions were analysed by employing an interpretative phenomenological analysis with the aid of ATLAS.ti 7 (Figure 1), a software for managing qualitative data.

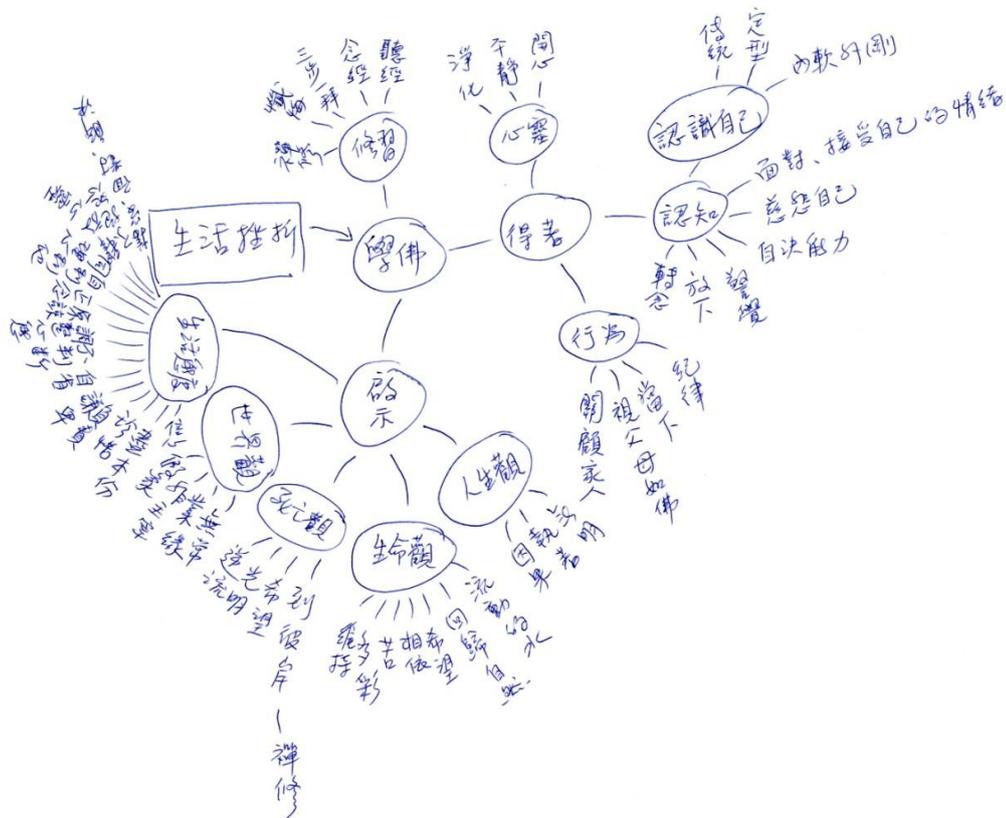
An interpretative phenomenological analysis, focusing on the existential phenomenological lens (Shinebourne 2011), is specifically suited to a case study which looks into an individual's subjective perception, sense of self, inner world, psychological reactions, and meaning in life (Bramley and Eatough 2005, Eatough and Smith 2006, Shinebourne and Smith 2009), without prior hypothesis or previous findings (Nithsdale et al. 2008). This approach emphasises the interaction between the researched and the researcher to minimise interpretation bias (Roncaglia 2010, Smith 1996) and optimise a holistic understanding of the participant.

In order to enhance research rigour, member-checking was adopted. The transcription was proofread by the participant to ensure the accuracy, which is important for appropriate data analysis. An analysis map (Figure 2) was then discussed with the participant in order to secure proper interpretation. Furthermore, a co-analyst was invited, who conducted separate coding from the principal analyst (the author). The principal analyst subsequently compared the two sets of coding, and developed the two super-ordinate themes and emergent themes (which will be exhibited in the following sections). This peer analysis achieved an inter-rater reliability of 93%, which signifies a high level of analysis objectivity.

Figure 1. *Qualitative Data Analysed with the Aid of ATLAS.ti 7*



Source: Author.

Figure 2. Analysis Map

Source: Author

Buddhist Insights into Life and Death

Dawn, a single middle-aged social worker and pious Buddhist, focuses on Theravāda (a denomination of Buddhism) in order to attain *nibbāna* for the ultimate liberation. She serves the elderly and patients with terminal illness in Singapore, because of which she frequently faces the suffering, vulnerabilities, and death of her clients, which triggers emotional fluctuation in her. Of note, Buddhist teachings and practices enable her to soothe tension and prevent compassion fatigue (Cheng 2014b), since Buddhism emphasises mind training (Smith-Stoner 2005) to conquer life's difficulties.

By analysing Dawn's data sharing, this research achieved two "super-ordinate themes" (Smith et al. 2009: 96) – first, principal Buddhist teachings which Dawn experienced; and second, interpretation of life and death – to express her strategies for managing death anxiety.

Principal Buddhist Teachings Which Dawn Experienced

Buddhism explains the formation of existence under the law of dependent origination, denoting interdependence and connectivity among all beings

(Epstein 2005). Buddhists conceive that nothing exists without the proper interaction of an aggregate of primary and supplementary causes (or conditions). For example, a seed is a main cause which needs the support of soil, water, and air to grow into a healthy plant. However, these conditions change frequently, with polluted water, for instance, which displays impermanence and an insubstantial nature (Conze 1953, Gethin 1998). Such uncertainties, transience, and temporalities reflect not only phenomenal reality but also an ever-changing self (Bruce 2007, Moreman 2008) in the sense of physical and mental domains (Watson 1998), due to internal and external factors, such as with the degeneration of body or changes of the mind. Moreover, the human body is a complex grouping of sensations, pertaining to seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching; which all affect the emotions. These sensory capabilities gradually decay, and emotional reactions change. This generates misunderstandings, particularly in people with dementia.

This theory (the law of dependent origination) provides Dawn with a positive worldview, rather than a pessimistic one, because she could perceive the open phenomenal system (Welwood 2003) and reduce the intensity of her self-centredness (Epstein 1999), which led her to experience the present moment, delineating that:

"I always remind myself not to adhere to my plan rigidly. ... I can gradually become more detached because life is uncontrollable; for instance, sudden death, sudden sickness, and failure. I can't control many things. I can't plan too much. Change is faster than planning. [Therefore, it's] too difficult to plan. But I remind myself everyday: I must treasure every minute and every second, and I have to lead my life. This means that I must try my utmost everyday [for everything]."

In addition, she applied her positive attitude towards vicissitudes to emotional management, as she understood the transposition of happiness and distress, from which she learned to accept impermanence and let go of misfortunes more easily, repeating as follows:

"Life contains unhappiness and happiness. But all these will pass on. ... Offering flowers to the Buddha (a Buddhist ritual) aims to remind us of the fact that [beautiful] flowers will wither, just like the fact that everything will fade out and everything will vanish. There is no permanence. ... This tells us that all things will go away, whether good and bad. [I] accept the unhappiness at that moment [when I was] unhappy [because I know that the unhappiness] will go away. I feel happy [and I know that] this moment will also go away. "

Despite the fact that individuals are always non-autonomous and powerless, they are able to create favourable conditions which result in a particular cause-and-effect: karmic effects (Keown 2000) that are caused by previous behaviour (Soothill 1913, Thubten 2008) in one's present and past

lives. Good actions produce appreciative feedback and poor behaviour engenders unfavourable fruit (Craig et al. 2010, Zopa 2012), which urges people to behave carefully and take responsibility for what they do (Conze 1967), inviting them to calmly accept the reality (Kain 2013) that is reflected in their inescapable karmic life (Keown n.d.). Dawn serenely described the people who treated her badly:

"My [ex-]boss is biased against me. I don't know why somebody ... Presently, I believe this is karma that has been brought forward from [my] previous lives. I must have had problems with him in previous lives. Therefore, he doesn't like me. He often compared me with my colleagues. He would give them opportunities and promote them. ... He would [always] complain about me ... harshly. In fact, any relationships linked to previous relationships – unfinished business in a past life that carries forward to this life. ... [Those people who dislike me] must have had [poor] relationships with me in my last life."

However, these frustrations did not weaken Dawn; instead, she gave up hatred in order to create good karma. She willingly forgave those who hurt her, which enabled her to realise compassion and self-compassion. This compassion-based approach improved her emotional regulation and self-discovery of inner resources. She elucidated that:

"The most important issue is the continued self-compassion and compassion towards other people. ... I'm very open. I forgive what I can forgive. This benefits me. [Meanwhile] I fight for what I should fight for. But if I'm unable to fight for it, I'll take it easy. I won't tangle with others. ... I won't blame them (those who bully me) because they are ignorant [about the phenomenal reality]. But I'm also too ignorant to be qualified to blame them."

In learning Buddhism, Dawn enhanced her self-reflection, knowing her weaknesses and strengths, which also increased her self-awareness and tranquillity. All these caused her to be more humble, so that she ameliorated her intra- and interpersonal relationships, as she confessed:

"The brightest insight I have gained from Buddhism is to know how subtle I am. ... Therefore, I become more humble, more humble. ... When I have problems, I perceive them positively. I'll complain less. ... I take care of my family more after learning Buddhism. "

The concepts of life and death in Buddhism present its core teachings on the law of dependent origination, impermanence, karma, cause-and-effect, and the cycle of death and re-birth (Black and Rubinstein 2013, Long 1975, Stonington 2011), revealing a distinct attitude towards death (Schafer 2007). Buddhists recognise that greed for protean life and resistance to unavoidable

death produce suffering, by which understanding Dawn pursues a rich life and hopes to reach "*the other shore*".

Interpretation of Life and Death

The set of Buddhist tenets gives Dawn room for personal interpretation of life and death. Such interpretation not only depicts the dynamic between life and the afterlife, but also highlights how she prepares for good death within her life.

Rich Life

A higher happiness level dissipates fear of death (Ziapour et al. 2014), but life is full of both joy and suffering (Janning 2014). Dawn focused on the beauty of life, consisting of water, sun, trees, flowers, and birds, each of which represents a complicated mixture of her belief and emotional states. She articulated her ideas through a drawing (Figure 3):

"... a tap, running tap water ... because water represents life. ... There is water, and then is the sun. When there is the sun, there is a smile. Why? Because the sun shining all over the world gives hope. After drawing the sun, I draw trees. ... The fruit on the trees stands for life. Then [I] draw flowers (sunflowers), and grass. ... Then [I draw] birds. They also represent life. ... a pair, a pair ... All these represent life. My life isn't colourful. It's not smooth. I have many down moments. ... I choose several [crayon] colours. Perhaps, this implies my underlying hope for a colourful life. ... [I believe life] comprises different things. Maybe, matching various things completes a fuller life."

Figure 3. *Rich Life*



Source: Cheng 2014a: 178.

Her perception and hope towards life extend to her understandings of death and the afterlife, her life style resonating with Buddhist practices such as meditation that will be delineated in a later section.

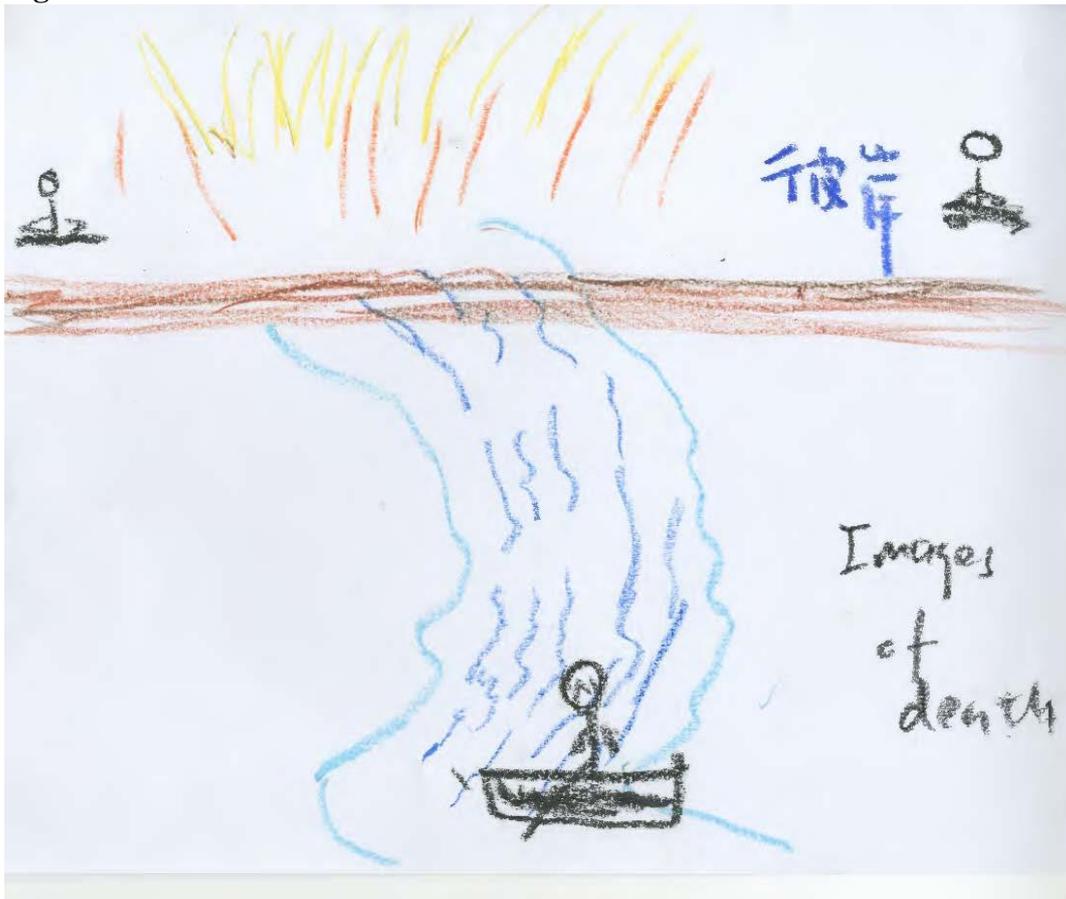
The Other Shore

Death is a natural process, as Buddhism relates (Bowman and Richard 2003); thus, Buddhists are poised to face demise (Chan et al. 2011), as detailed by Dawn, who improved her mortality salience (Ma-Kellams and Blascovich 2012):

"My father and mother are getting old. They'll leave us sooner or later. [I] have gradually accepted this fact. I remind myself of such facts. Previously, I was [always] very nervous. When my father was in the hospital, I was very nervous. To me, he was already old. His clothes (his body) are already old. He'll leave these clothes sooner or later. ... I already understand this. I [also] prepare for myself (my death)."

This interpretation of death pertains to two dimensions, although death does not necessarily mean death (Desjarlais 2000). On the one hand, life is endless and implicitly involves death and re-birth (Metzner 1996, Ratanakul 2004), representing recurrence of suffering in the human world (Masel et al. 2010). On the other hand, Buddhists strive for liberation (Piven 2003), that is, the ultimate dissolution of the cycle of life and death. The termination of this cycle extends past the afterlife (Hasker 2005). It converts the physical body into a "transcendent body" (Bernstein 2012: 275), resulting from the transcendence of craving (Florida 1991), by bringing suffering forward to the *other shore* (Whitehill 1994), which stands for a desirable output. Dawn delineated her idea of the *other shore* (Figure 4) as follows:

"I drew a river. It's a boundary. ... Reaching here is the *other shore*. ... Because here implies brightness. Reaching the *other shore* is full of hope. ... I learned Buddhism and changed my concept of death. The *other shore* is full of hope. Death does not necessarily mean darkness. Perhaps, [I] can reach the *other shore* after death. "

Figure 4. *The Other Shore*

Source: Cheng and Tse 2014: 6.

Aiming to reach the *other shore*, Dawn practised meditation for emancipation, stating:

"[When I draw this picture,] I add a person practising meditation. ... Meditation is an important way to go to the *other shore*, I believe. ... [I] know there is an *other shore*. Meditation is a method [to attain it]. Therefore, I continue my meditation. "

Meditation or mindfulness has been popularly adopted for therapeutic purposes, as a choice of integrative medicine (Williams-Orlando 2012), or complementary and alternative medicine (Barnett and Shale 2012, Cuellar 2008), with positive indicators (Baer 2003, Brown and Ryan 2003, Teasdale et al. 1995) over a wide spectrum of physical and mental illnesses, including cancer survivors (Birnie et al. 2010, Bränström et al. 2010, Johnston 2012, Thornton et al. 2014), chronic pain (Grant and Rainville 2009, Kabat-Zinn 1982, McCracken and Vowles 2014), depression and anxiety (Anderson et al. 1999, Liehr and Diaz 2010, Williams et al. 2014), panic disorder (Kim et al. 2010), eating disorders (Godsey 2013, Kristeller et al. 2014), obsessive-compulsive disorder (Hertenstein et al. 2012), posttraumatic stress disorder

(Barnes et al. 2013, Seppala et al. 2014), family and couple relationships (Beckerman and Sarracco 2011, Cohen-Katz 2004, Duncan et al. 2009, Gehart, 2012), professional burnout (Cohen-Katz et al. 2005, Vilaradaga et al. 2012, Zeller and Levin 2013), attention deficit hyperactive disorders (Carboni et al. 2013, Haydicky et al. 2012), and developmental disabilities (Hastings and Manikam 2013, Hwang and Kearney 2014).

From among various meditation approaches, Dawn practises insight meditation (Pali: *vipassanā*), which cultivates wisdom (Disayavanish and Disayavanish 2007), and enables her to achieve a balanced mind and insight into the phenomenal reality, resulting in accomplishments in genuine happiness (Ekman et al. 2005) and quality of life (Taniguchi, n.d.). Through this purification process, she gained spiritual freedom, acclaiming that:

"[I] surrender what I don't need, what tightens me, what affects my practices, and particularly my attachments. ... This is liberation. [When I] give up these, [I can] forgive those [who treat me badly]. ... Because I can reduce self-centredness. ... I know more about myself. I know why I was unhappy. ... When I meditate, I have the feeling that if I don't attach so much and if I can become more open, I'll be happy."

Apart from her increased self-awareness that, "when I cry, I'm mindful. I know why I'm crying", equally as important, is that she prepares for a peaceful death with a pacified mind (Kongsuwan et al. 2010b, Smith-Stoner 2006) through such disciplined mind training.

Non-Duality between Life and Death

The current case study reveals that spiritual care is essential for peaceful dying (Kongsuwan and Touhy 2009). Buddhism construes an endless continuum of living and dying from two dimensions. The cycle of death and re-birth as affected by karma places an emphasis on life, urging virtue and moral behaviour (Lin and Yen 2015). Virtuous behaviour not only raises a good life but also deliberately brings forward a good afterlife, ultimately referring to liberation. When death causes re-birth, death is necessary for a new life. Limitless re-births create infinite life and death, which generates suffering from loss and attachment. In such cases, life and death are not antithetic but symbiotic. Likewise, a good life and good afterlife has become a pair of twins, denoting that life and afterlife have no differences per se. Life is a practice in the secular world and afterlife is a practice on the *other shore*. Death links up with life, afterlife, re-birth and liberation, indicating that life and death are not antagonistic but are simply varied forms of representation. All these not only discourage death denial but also transcend death anxiety (Chaiwitkornwanich 2014).

Buddhism also enunciates the non-dualism of life and death by raising the concept of an "empirical self" (Burns 2003: 93), namely, a phenomenal self. In

light of the law of dependent origination, all living beings are manifestations of phenomena. The physical body is a manifestation of life; so death is of the afterlife. As such, manifestations are insubstantial, volatile and transient, which reflects the nature of life and death. This deconstructs the polarisation between living and dying (Loy 1990, 2000), and conflates the "dichotomy between being and non-being" (Loy 1992: 153), dissolving the feeling of loss (Loy 2002). With minimal unpleasant emotions, Buddhists can accept death tranquilly (Kongsuwan et al. 2010a), so that they can resolve grief and bereavement more easily (Goss and Klass 1997).

Implications

Findings reveal practical implications to therapeutic practitioners, including non-judgemental communication, religious-based communication, and mindfulness training. These techniques can relax the tensions of clients who suffer from mental distress, such as death anxiety. Notwithstanding, limitations of this study and directions for future research are also presented.

Shared experiences from a group of hospice volunteers ascertain the significance for companionship and listening without judgement for hospice service (Baugher 2008), which aligns with the Buddhist non-judgemental notion. Non-dualism removes the two extremes, for example, life and death, realising non-judgement. Dawn appreciates both life and afterlife, and strives to attain well-being in the present and future lives. Hence, palliative care workers listen to the clients non-judgementally and respectfully, disregarding workers' religious orientations. Such non-judgemental listening will result in mutual trust, truly companionship and hearty communication, which are the foremost qualities of serving end-of-life clients.

Communication, particularly verbal expression, forms a vital part in therapeutic settings (Kourkouta and Papathanasiou 2014), in which service providers echo with service recipients when they communicate through the same language. In a religious-based platform, same language refers to dogmatic terminology; for instance, karma, the cycle of death and rebirth, and impermanence in Buddhism. Using religious terms touches clients' inner feelings and grasps their core values of life, because of which the therapeutic rapport and engagement will be built more skilfully in spiritual, transpersonal communication (Sherko et al. 2013). Therefore, death-related service providers are able to flexibly deal with clients with different religions if they receive training associated with greater diversity of religious knowledge.

Mindfulness/meditation is an important practice across various Buddhist traditions, which instils calmness and a peaceful mind (Kabat-Zinn 2009). This tranquillity fosters self-awareness (Bruce and Davies 2005), self-acceptance (Carson 2006), self-compassion (Hoge et al. 2013, Raab 2014), non-dualistic views (Gill et al. 2015), and forgiveness (Webb et al. 2013) due to a complex of neurophysiological mechanisms (Jerath et al. 2012, Vago and Silbersweig 2012). These internal resources positively correlate with physical health

(Lawler et al. 2005) and psychological well-being (Germer and Neff 2013, Krause and Ellison 2003, Palos and Vîscu 2014). Thus, mindfulness training is proposed to death-related service practitioners (Cacciatore et al. 2015) (for example, grief and bereavement, palliative and hospice care) and their clients in order to empower themselves to enhance mental wellness. Notably, mindfulness can be assimilated into daily activities (Kabat-Zinn 2005, Keune and Forintos 2010, Tart 1990) to achieve long-term effectiveness. Since the practice of mindfulness/meditation cultivates bare attention, contemplation, clear comprehension, and a sense of present awareness (Bodhi 2011), it can be applied to mindful eating, walking, sleeping, gardening, and sport (Cheng 2015c) to optimise its effects. This can be applied to non-Buddhist clients and practitioners to enrich mental wellness, including a reduction in death anxiety.

In spite of potential applications elicited by the outcomes of this project, as discussed earlier, there are two limitations. In the first place, even though this single case study reveals how a Buddhist perceives life and death supported by Buddhist philosophy, it does not intend to make a generalisation, as case studies focus on exploring scenarios in an in-depth fashion rather than generalising phenomena (Thomas 2011). Research on this topic with a larger sample size is suggested to obtain a general view. In the second place, this case study unveils the Buddhist theories which are in the participant's favour, such as the law of dependent origination, impermanence, cause-and-effect, karma, and the cycle of death and re-birth. However, a spectrum of Buddhist wisdom is recommended to be further investigated for good life and good death; for instance, Buddhist altruism (Cheng 2015b) is a proposed direction for future research.

Conclusion

Having a distinct attitude towards life and death which is embedded in countless relay races until liberation has been attained, Buddhists understand dying through cultivating a good life, and enjoy living by letting go of death. The interdependence of life and death unifies these binaries; therefore, Buddhists are able to dispel their resistance to death, and look forward to achieving the *other shore*. This elucidates the Buddhist concept of relaxation of death anxiety, and accounts for the role of inner resources in good death, including self-awareness, acceptance, compassion, non-dualistic views, and forgiveness. These Buddhist theories shed light on death-related services such as grief and bereavement, and palliative and hospice care.

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