

TEAM



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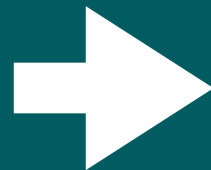
Buddhist



Attended a weekly “Special Buddhist Practice” meeting found on [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) for two and a half hours.

Observed communication in a religious context including spiritual, interpersonal, and distance communication.

Ethnographic Observation



Paparazzi

Note Taking

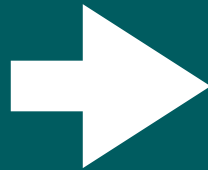
One team member abstained from the session and just observed while secretly taking notes of the proceedings.

We did not inform subjects that they were being observed, because we did not want to disrupt the spiritual experience with intrusive filming and camera flashes.

We did not want subjects to feel self conscious.

Recorded detailed observations of subjects' actions, expressions, and speech during the session opposed to interviewing afterwards because religious experiences happen in the moment.

Participant Observation



Deep Hangin' Out

Other two team members actively engaged in group meditation, chanting and discussion with participants.

We decided to actively participate in the session because religious experiences are very personal and impossible to understand without direct involvement.



Walk'n in Their Shoes

Many Buddhist rituals are performed as a group and so group participation is necessary to understand the full experience.

Observations from Spiritual Communication



Anapurna, the chant leader, tried to engage participants using threatening eye-contact.

Participants were at different levels of intensity during the chanting. Some were giggling, yawning, or silent while others swayed and chanted vigorously.

There were brief moments when everyone was synchronized.

Insights from Spiritual Communication

The group can hurt or help you in this exercise. When everyone is engaged, as demonstrated through synchronized swaying and fervent chanting, it fulfills the purpose of chanting (to reach the state of catharsis). But it only takes one disengaged person to break the rhythm.

How might we maximize and retain the power of the group?

Observations from Interpersonal Communication

“I’ve been studying for 4 years, our [yogi] has been for multiple lifetimes”

“Our Rinpoche [teacher] was, at age 6, recognized as the 68th Lineage Holder of the Nagavara Raja Lineage... Rinpoche is connecting with us in ways we don’t understand”

[Everytime a stranger comes into the room] “Oh look another newbie”

Insights from Interpersonal Communication

Leaders try to create a communal experience but there is a clear hierarchy of “teachers” based on the length of time they have studied Buddhism. This hierarchy is used as motivation for the younger disciples. However, it inadvertently discourages newcomers.

How might we create a more balanced environment so newcomers feel equal and are encouraged to continue practicing Buddhism?

Observations from Distance Communication



Julie

Julie, the leader, manages the Skype communication while chanting.

Insights from Distance Communication

Julie, the leader, wants to immerse herself in chanting but must also manage Skype communication.

Anapurna, the chant leader, made eye contact to engage participants but could not engage virtual participants.

How might we create a remote group + spiritual experience?



Demographic Insights

People from all backgrounds:

85 year old woman: reserved and participatory

Math teacher: group leader, took pride in knowing facts

Obese housewife: didn't participate, socialized frequently

Tech professional: chanted the loudest

People have all come to the session with different motivations: longing for a community, spiritual questioning, or for a religious fix.

Questions?

(Where did we get the mangos...)

