

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring Awareness and Resistance to Nonattachment in Relation to Mental Health

A Qualitative Study in a UK-Based Yoga Community

Lindsay TREMBLAY ¹ ✉, William VAN GORDON ¹



Affiliations

¹ School of Psychology, University of Derby, United Kingdom

✉ Correspondence

School of Psychology, University of Derby, Kedleston Road, Derby, Derbyshire, DE22 1GB, UK
Email: L.Tremblay1@unimail.derby.ac.uk

History

Received: 22 March 2023

Accepted: 24 August 2023

Published: 26 September 2023

Citation

Tremblay, L., & Van Gordon, W. (2023). Exploring Awareness and Resistance to Nonattachment in Relation to Mental Health. *A Qualitative Study in a UK-Based Yoga Community*. *European Journal of Mental Health*, 18, 0011, 1–16.
<https://doi.org/10.5708/EJMH.18.2023.0011>

Introduction: Nonattachment is a flexible and balanced way of relating to experiences that involves accepting or allowing, instead of clinging to, expectations or outcomes. Advancing the understanding of how people relate to nonattachment is important because of the associated mental health benefits.

Aims: To qualitatively explore awareness of, and resistance to, nonattachment in a UK-based yoga community.

Methods: A reflexive thematic analysis was conducted based on transcripts of ten semi-structured interviews.

Results: Findings indicated a general lack of consensus in understanding nonattachment, with explanatory themes of (i) resistance related to external forces conflicting with internal knowing, (ii) bracing for impact, and (iii) difficulty navigating how to embrace nonattachment. However, despite the participants' apparent implicit negativity towards nonattachment, they acknowledged its benefits for accommodating change.

Conclusions: These findings have important implications for the wider adoption and application of nonattachment in applied settings.

Keywords: nonattachment; surrender; reflexive thematic analysis; mental health

Introduction

According to the House of Commons Mental Health Statistics Report (Baker & Kirk-Wade, 2023), one in six adults living in England have experienced a common mental disorder such as depression or anxiety. Additionally, at 22.8%, poor mental health is the primary cause of disability throughout the UK, compared with 15.9% for cancer, and 16.2% for cardiovascular disease (Department of Health, 2011; World Health Organisation, 2022). Although the UK government spends an estimated £213 billion a year on health (UK public spending, 2022), the funds allocated to mental health by the NHS in 2020–2021 were £14.3 billion (NHS, 2017), or 6.71%. The apparent under-allocation of resources to mental health services and supports across the UK indicates an unmet need when it comes to addressing mental health issues. It therefore becomes important to consider how people might be able to nurture their own mental health and well-being, where possible. One area recently found to be worthy of additional attention and research for this context is nonattachment.

Nonattachment, rooted in the Eastern contemplative traditions of Buddhism and Hinduism, dates back over 2,500 and 3,500 years, respectively (Whitehead et al., 2018a). Nonattachment is also one of the Mahavratas in Jainism, which reflect five major vows that Jain monks are expected to adhere to as part of a grander ascetic approach to life (Sethi, 2009). Buddhism asserts that suffering can be caused by fixations or attachments related to thoughts, perceptions of self, and how life 'should' be (Elphinstone & Whitehead, 2019). This may be due to the incompatibility and misalignment of static fixations and a reality in constant flux or change (Hanh, 1999). Nonattachment links to Buddhist wisdom principles such as wholeness, non-self and non-duality, based on the assumption that the self does not exist as an independent entity and that there is in fact nothing to truly be attached to (Van Gordon et al., 2019).

Nonattachment is generally understood to represent a flexible and balanced way of relating to experiences; relinquishing the need to cling to or suppress them (Sahdra et al., 2015). Becoming nonattached to outcomes removes the dependence one has on them (Chio et al., 2018). "When people are nonattached, their perceived sense of well-being is noncontingent – that is, not dependent on particular circumstances." (Sahdra et al., 2010, p. 118). Nonattachment is said to be a separate and independent construct from attachment styles posited by classic Attachment Theory (Ainsworth, 1978, 2015; Bowlby, 1982, 1998). Where classic Attachment theory posits styles of developmental and relational connectivity, nonattachment links to one's ability to simply experience, without the need to alter.

It remains unclear whether in practical application people have an agreed upon understanding of what nonattachment is. Relatively new to the attention of Western academia, the concept of nonattachment is still in infancy within the scientific literature. Compare this with, for example, 'emotion', which has been widely researched and expansively defined and debated amongst multiple cultures and languages (Russell et al., 2013). Nevertheless, emotion still has multiple meanings, within multiple applications, across multiple contexts. Therefore, it is perhaps premature for the academic community to project its own understanding of nonattachment onto the population at large. It may be that a key to understanding resistance to nonattachment lies in people's interpretation of it as well as their broader epistemological stance (Sosa, 2017).

There are also similarities between nonattachment (including nonattachment to self) and the transcendence of ego states or stages where the latter can involve significant personal struggle (Prebish, 1975). This struggle may be an opening to the totality of the self (Hidas, 1981), or, in psychotherapeutic language, surrender. 'Surrender' in this sense does not involve the waving of a proverbial white flag, but rather the antithesis of resistance to a new way of perceiving self and reality (Ghent, 1990). Surrender is often brought about by the catalyst of crisis and may commence outside of the ego-controlled or 'attached' mind: "Surrender involves a leap, a push, a giving-up, an abandonment of hope, a cleansing through painful purgation for which no exclusively rational process can substitute." (Hidas, 1981, p. 30).

Nonattachment also shares some overlap with Asceticism; a Graeco-Roman legacy characterized by withdrawal from environmental, physical, and sexual stimuli to focus on the pursuit of spiritual goals (Finn, 2009). Asceticism evolved through Abrahamic religions and took on a meaning of self-denial, self-punishment, and renunciation. In Eastern teachings, such as the Yogavāsiṣṭha, the meaning evolved to represent spiritual enlightenment accessible through detachment from closely held assumptions and interpretations of the real world (Horan, 2011). However, Asceticism in its original iteration of extreme dissociation has been criticized as potentially leading to maladaptive psychosocial functioning (Horan, 2011). Indeed, where the original behavior of the Ascetic individual might involve leaving behind worldly pursuits of material possessions and even family to seek enlightenment, in contemporary research, psychological wellbeing is frequently associated with a sense of belonging to a community and family (Cheung et al., 2017; Haggerty et al., 1992; Hill, 2006).

Nonattachment is arguably implicit within the practice of mindfulness (Shonin & Van Gordon, 2013), although nonattachment is also asserted to be a separate and distinct construct (Sahdra et al., 2016). Research indicates that nonattachment may act as a facilitator or mediator for the positive effects of mindfulness and mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) (Sahdra et al., 2016). However, research has been unable to yield conclusive evidence of causality, and therefore the relationship between these two constructs remains somewhat unclear (Whitehead, 2019), perhaps in part because out of the approximately 100 studies of nonattachment to date, very few have employed qualitative methodologies. Indeed, as noted by Whitehead (2019) "To date, there has been no qualitative investigation on nonattachment to gain an understanding of how nonattachment (or attachment) presents, or is developed, in the general population." (Whitehead, 2019, p. 32).

The field of nonattachment research continues to grow and continues to demonstrate application involving a wide range of psychological benefits and outcomes (Whitehead et al., 2018a). For example, nonattachment has been positively correlated with overall well-being (Chao & Chen, 2013; Feliu-Soler et al., 2016; Sahdra et al., 2010) and pro-social behaviors by way of empathy, kindness (Sahdra et al., 2015) and adaptive psychosocial functioning (Van Gordon et al., 2019). Furthermore, nonattachment has been found to be a significant predictor of pro-nature conservation behaviour (Barrows et al., 2022), and has been correlated with fewer symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress (Sahdra et al., 2010; Whitehead et al., 2018b), less psychological distress (Coffey & Hartman, 2008) and reduced suicidal rumination (Dvorak et al., 2013; Tran et al., 2014). Nonattachment has also been found to mediate associations between mindfulness, well-being, and psychological distress (Ho et al., 2022), and people higher in nonattachment may be less egoistic (Gupta & Agrawal, 2022).

Nonattachment also correlates with improved relationship harmony (Wang et al., 2016), which in turn is linked to reduced psychological distress and negative affect, and improved emotion regulation (Cebolla et al., 2018). Nonattachment has further been linked with mitigation of pain related to symptoms of physical illness such as fibromyalgia (Van Gordon et al., 2016, 2017). One study found that improved nonattachment scale scores were correlated with reductions in PTSD symptom severity, anxiety sensitivity, rejection sensitivity, and changes of the empathic concern and empathy's personal distress aspects (Joss et al., 2020). Furthermore, nonattachment is asserted to be a key mechanism by which mindfulness fosters salutary health outcomes, although multiple pathways may exist through which nonattachment is cultivated, beyond mindfulness (Whitehead et al., 2020).

Research has suggested that individuals suffering from mental health symptoms may be assisted by way of interventions designed to build nonattachment and reduce fixation on outcomes as they 'should' be, in particular via 'cognitive and experiential pathways' (Whitehead et al., 2020). Cognitive pathways entail a focus on acceptance and resolution of challenges. Experiential pathways entail intentional practice at cultivating wisdom related to the ever-changing nature of experience (Whitehead et al., 2020). However, the pathway to the pathways remains unknown. That is, we do not currently understand why some people embrace nonattachment, and others resist it.

This ambiguity may be viewed within the context of Reflective Connection and Intent Connection (Vallacher & Wegner, 1987). Reflexive Connection suggests that much like classic Self-Perception Theory (Bem, 1972), people search for causal stimuli from their environments and embrace a behavior when they find it. When causal relationships, such as that between nonattachment and mindfulness remain vague, the behavior is less likely to be performed. Contrastingly, Intent Connection (Vallacher & Wegner, 1987) holds cognitive representations of actions, such as embracing nonattachment, to function as templates for behavior. While this offers a helpful explanation for basic physical movements (e.g., I am thinking of sitting, so I sit), the link between cognition and action stands less clear. Action Identification Theory (AIT) comprises both theories and posits that the relationship between cognitive representation and behavior is not unidirectional, but cyclical (Vallacher & Wegner, 1987). Ultimately, AIT suggests that various identities exist to which people subscribe, which in combination with their understanding of the action (e.g., embrace nonattachment), and their ability to maintain the action, will produce or fail to produce it. It offers a perspective on the reciprocal feedback between thought and doing, and understanding what one is doing (Parkin et al., 2015). Therefore, understanding the concept or action becomes somewhat critical.

As discussed, nonattachment stems from the contemplative disciplines such as Buddhism and Hinduism, both of which are categorized for philosophical consideration as intellectual factions, but are in truth also religions (Derricourt, 2021). There is a profusion of reasons why people may hold anti-religious attitudes, or prejudices towards religions (Dawkins, 2008; Hitchens, 2008; Ross, 1990; Zuckerman, 2012), which are beyond the scope of this paper. Resistance due to religious connotations, however, has been observed for mindfulness and this cannot be ruled out as a factor influencing how people may view and contextualize nonattachment.

While nonattachment may have a growing consensus of definition within the academic community, it could be that a lack of clarity in the general population prevents a more prevalent embracing of its benefits. It might also be that prejudices, aversions, or capacities play a role in resistance. This study seeks to address these gaps in knowledge by exploring personal understandings of, and resistance to, nonattachment, including the degree to which personal perceptions of nonattachment align with the research community's definition. More specifically, this study aims to identify themes which may be used both for resistance explanatory purposes, and for the consideration of how to embrace nonattachment in the future.

Methods

Design

This study followed a qualitative design, utilizing a primarily deductive analysis through invoking existing theoretical constructs that provided the lens through which data were coded and themed. The focus of meaning tended towards the semantic, accepting the discourse of participants as true representations of their experiences. However, the qualitative framework was also critically orientated, with the analysis focusing on unpacking meaning around the topics (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The theoretical framework held a Social Constructionist perspective throughout, reflecting a consistent effort to analyze overall patterns expressed across the data set.

Participants

Participants were recruited from among individuals attending yoga practice centers in the UK, based on the fact that a degree of pre-existing exposure to contemplative wellbeing principles is typical of the profile of individuals who are likely to engage further with meditative teachings (Simonsson et al., 2020). A link was distributed via a monthly yoga newsletter inviting members to participate in the study. To ensure participants met the study eligibility criteria, they were screened for age (18+), residency within the UK, absence of current diagnosis of mental illness or recent (within three days) use of psychopharmacological recreational drugs. Participants (six female, four male) were between 31 and 76 years old [$M(SD) = 45.7(13.9)$].

Materials

Participants attended a semi-structured interview comprising eight exploratory open-ended questions by which researchers sought to gain an understanding of how the participants understood nonattachment, and what, if any, resistance to it they had. Questions were generated through consultations with two certified life coaches for the purpose of encouraging maximum understanding, engagement, and consideration. The final interview schedule comprised the following:

1. What does nonattachment mean to you?
2. How have you come to that understanding?
3. How does nonattachment show up for you in your daily life?
4. How do you know if nonattachment is a benefit, or if it is a drawback?
5. Are there times you feel an attitude of nonattachment might be problematic?
6. What do you think prevents you from a more nonattached attitude in your life?
7. How do you know when you are experiencing resistance to nonattachment?
8. How do you think you might be able to work through resistance to nonattachment?

Procedure

The Research Ethics Committee of the authors' academic institution, based in the East Midlands, UK, approved the research. The interview lasted for up to 60 minutes depending on participants' communication styles. Participants were interviewed exclusively online via Microsoft Teams and interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data were manually 'scrubbed' for digital transcription errors, which was considered part of the data familiarization process. All names and identifying information were removed. Qualtrics was used for administering the participant pre-screening form, consent form, and debrief form.

Analytical Strategy

The data were analyzed using the six-step method of Reflexive Thematic Analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019, 2021; see [Table 1](#)).

On an interview-by-interview basis, the primary researcher (LT) became familiar with the data to identify diversity of meaning and possible patterning across the dataset. This involved an active meaning making, challenging, and contrasting of items within the dataset. Analytic sensibility was also applied (Braun & Clarke, 2021),

Table 1. Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2016, p. 12)

Step	Summary
Data Familiarisation	This is an iterative process of transcribing, reading, immersing, and noting initial patterns.
Code generation	Noticing interesting features of the data and beginning the process of systematically coding and organizing these.
Theme generation	Clustering codes into potential themes and gathering all relevant supporting extracts from the data.
Theme review	Critically analyzing whether themes work with the coded extracts, generating a thematic map to understand where themes exist within the wider context of the entire dataset.
Meaning making	Ongoing clarification of the specifics of the theme, generating a clear, representative name/label, and understanding the lens through which meaning has been ascribed to the data.
Reporting	Further analysis of the theme itself and how it addresses the research question and engages with existing literature. Selecting the clearest and most poignant extract examples and producing a scholarly report.

which reflects a process of producing insights into the dataset beyond surface level content, and identifying connections to existing theory, research, and wider contexts. The analytical procedure began with identifying commonly made and meaning-connected statements across the interviews. This was a recursive process with multiple ‘takes’ demarcated by different coloured notes on printed transcripts. These notes were converted to ‘codes’ with a description of the meaning each code captured and a note about why that was important to the research. The codes were eventually clustered into themes grouped around a central organizing concept and interpreted through the researcher’s knowledge of the data’s wider context.

While the researchers acknowledge that no singular interpretation of the data exists, the socially constructed, semantic, and critically analytic approach adopted does not reduce the data to underlying causes or force them into theoretical formulations (Willig & Rogers, 2008). Additionally, methodological integrity may be assessed through fidelity to the subject matter and utility in achieving research goals (Levitt et al., 2018). Furthermore, this approach permitted the researchers to draw on relevant research and theory to add theoretical depth to the analysis. Themes were generated by the primary researcher and cross-checked with the second author for viability and validity. Themes then underwent a process of member-checking to enhance methodological integrity (Levitt et al., 2018), by way of an email sent to all participants detailing a high-level overview of the themes and soliciting feedback. Two of the ten participants offered additional feedback (one by way of a follow up interview) whereby they confirmed a strong level of overall theme agreement.

Results

The data analysis generated four themes as outlined in Table 2:

Theme 1: ‘Living by consensus or by senses’

This theme represents societal, cultural, and external pressures, judgements, and expectations that appeared to impinge on participants’ understanding and experience of nonattachment. It explores the ways in which participants’ personal natures, human condition, own knowing, or personal compass was somehow squashed or contraindicated by a bigger, external force. Participants frequently commented on external forces, which were conveyed as somehow misaligned or even in direct conflict with their own internal knowing and/or desire to experience a state of being nonattached. Participants positioned their intuition, including as it relates to nonattachment, as something not immediately or easily accessible due to these external forces. For example, Participant 3 (P3) stated:

“It’s just the work of understanding yourself more and more to understand better what it is that, where your obstacles are”.

Table 2. Thematic Construction

Theme	Explanation	Subthemes	Sample Quote
1. Living by Consensus or Senses	Captures the conflict between culture and personal intuition whereby external forces regularly act to supersede our own internal knowing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context/perspective • Non judgemental • Removing Emotion • Should • Sentimentality • Internal moral compass 	"I find their projections onto me as to the way to live their life. Sometimes I feel like I should be more like them".
2. Bracing for impact	Reflects how participants primed themselves for challenges ahead, somewhat similar to a state of hypervigilance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence from things & people • Acceptance/choice • Managing time • Removing emotion • What we want vs what we get 	"I often challenge myself and think, right, you know, what if I lost this? You know, what would it be? The end of the world?"
3. Concept Confusion	Corresponds to a general lack of consensus among participants in understanding what nonattachment is and is not.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "My" understanding • Experience • Maturity • Learning 	"...it would be nice if somehow more of the population was aware and could practice this."
4. Active vs passive surrender – a balancing act	Captures the difficulty of finding the right line to walk between complete surrender to the universe and a continued attachment to steering outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to control • Pulled by emotion • Intention • Apathy • The Universe's plans 	"I personally think that if you were looking around and not just floating around that you can see opportunities a little bit quicker and that you can create a better life for yourself."

P3 speaks to the work of understanding oneself and adopting a more nonattached attitude as something that requires effort, and the obstacles appear to represent cultural forces that interfere with this understanding. This conflict was similarly represented by Participant 6 (P6), who commented as follows:

"I find their projections onto me as to the way to live their life. Sometimes I feel like I should be more like them".

This appears to represent an idea whereby one's internal knowing, or one's desire to adopt a more nonattached attitude, isn't aligned with a culturally prescribed sense of 'should'. It therefore becomes important to understand more about what this external/socio-cultural force is. Maintaining a Social Constructionist approach to data analysis, it is helpful to see culture defined as a socially constructed concept. Culture is "a loosely integrated system of ideas, practices, and social institutions that enable coordination of a behavior in a population" (Morris et al., 2015, p. 632). Culture can map onto geographic regions, organizations, social classes, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and much more (Hamedani & Markus, 2019), and it is important to understand that within cultural cycles individuals can influence cultures as much as cultures can influence individuals (Markus & Conner, 2014). However, as cultures are created and maintained by individuals, when they cease to serve diverse or non-dominant perspectives, this can be conceptualized as culture clash. That is, when the institutions of a given culture accrue enough power to influence it more heavily than the individuals themselves, then there is a potential for conflict. When P6 notes, "I find their projections onto me as to the way to live their life", this appears to connect with the idea of a power imbalance between his own sense of knowing, or desire to embrace nonattachment, and the external pressure to conform.

Institutions rich in power in Western society are undoubtedly capitalistic (Lasswell & Kaplan, 2017). This is true of organizations, religions, and governments. Their dominance provides the power to set terms under which other groups and classes should operate (Domhoff, 2018). This idea is touched on by Participant 8 (P8):

"...Again the programming of our society and Western culture being go go go and just not having the skills, or yeah, the awareness. But there's other ways".

Here, P8 acknowledges the cultural pressure to "go go go" which, in a capitalist society, contributes to ongoing domination by the institutions in power. It would not serve powerful institutions to have members of society pausing to reflect and consider their own knowing, their own moral compass, or even who they really are outside

of the context in which they are culturally situated. Nor would it serve powerful institutions to lose the ability to prescribe a sense of 'should' to individuals. Specific to nonattachment, as it is so clearly connected to an idea of outcomes, or more specifically releasing connection to outcomes, one can see where powerful institutions might be best served when individuals all strive for a continuation of their power.

As cultures can map onto such a wide range of concepts, all of which are themselves arguably socially constructed, (e.g., a country, a gender, an organization; Burr, 2015), it is perhaps worth considering whether resistance to nonattachment might in any way be aided by considering who stands to gain when one acts against one's own knowing. P3 touches on this idea when referencing the work of better understanding what your obstacles are, as does P8 when she mentions not having the necessary awareness.

Theme 2: 'Bracing for Impact'

This theme captures the participant's predilection for either attachment or nonattachment by way of preparing, practicing, or priming for hard times, much like a state of chronic hypervigilance. As well as frequently commenting on anticipating future events and challenges, participants spoke to a practice of preparing for the future. They positioned this practice as something that might help them handle future challenges in a more nonattached way. A particularly salient example of this was offered by Participant 4 (P4):

"I often challenge myself and think, right, you know, what if I lost this? You know, what would it be? The end of the world?"

Here, P4 conveys a sense of practice through her reference to frequency when she says she will "often challenge" herself. She offers deeper insight into her context and meaning when she shares:

"I can't imagine my life without her in it um, so again, yeah, challenging those thoughts and how would I be? And I guess in a sense you're kind of then preparing yourself for the outcome if you can kind of learn that in the now [...] It's going to help you later on in the event that it happens."

P4 seems to understand in a hard, real world context that a difficult situation looms on the horizon and that embracing nonattachment is likely to help her when the time comes. This seems to draw on an element of attaching to the future, which stands contrary to the true essence of nonattachment, that is, an interaction with experience free of fixation or need for it to be a certain way (Whitehead, 2019). Fixating on or practicing for a future situation, even within the context of reducing attachment to it, is arguably attachment to nonattachment. This forward focused state of bracing or preparing for a time or situation where one might need to adopt an attitude or position of nonattachment appears to parallel hypervigilance. Hypervigilance is a "behavioral, cognitive and physiological state of hyperarousal and alertness for a potential threat" (Kleshcova et al., 2019, p. 1). Threat detection neural circuitry connected with the amygdala is known to mediate the cognitive (increased alertness/threat forecasting) component of hypervigilance (Yoon & Weierich, 2016). Exposure to traumatic events can result in hypervigilance even in the absence of threats (Kimble et al., 2013). Previous experiences inevitably influence how we respond to new situations (Whitehead, 2019). P3 represents this idea as follows:

"I think it's perhaps trying to recognize those things and recognize why you're feeling a certain way, why you're experiencing life in a certain way based on the experiences that you've had in the past and it's making you act that way."

This reaching back in time to negative events and using them to guide oneself in the present in preparation for inevitable future negative events, when viewed through a lens of hypervigilance, could indicate that nonattachment carries an implicit negativity which may prevent wider adoption. Although nonattachment was consistently viewed by participants as a primarily positive construct, it was not usually positioned as a necessary practice for positive or stress-free situations.

Alternatively, there may exist a process at play similar to amygdala habituation (Kim et al., 2019), in which the adaptation of the amygdala to chronic or repeated stress contributes to an involuntary state of hypervigilance. The key implication of that kind of parallel is the involuntary nature of it. Effectively, it could indicate that 'bracing for impact' is involuntary and therefore precludes some people from a more successful adoption of nonattachment.

Theme 3: 'Concept confusion'

This theme captures a lack of consensus in participants' understanding of nonattachment, what it means, what its antonym is, and a consistent positioning of nonattachment as existing on a scale. Participants generally deemed nonattachment to be a quality one embodies on a sliding scale, not as a binary construct. This is consistent with the existing research regarding the development of the nonattachment scale (Chio et al., 2018; Elphinstone et al., 2020; Sahdra et al., 2010), which captures the extent to which one embodies qualities of nonattachment. Aside from some general confusion around what being nonattached really meant, there were also a variety of concepts against which it was contrasted. Where the definition of nonattachment itself often hovered around the psychological research community's definition of it, it was interesting to observe the variation of antonyms. Consider the following from P8:

"Most humans in general don't practice nonattachment. I can think of, you know, a handful of friends off the top of my head and my dad, people that are control freaks and I, I'm also one, and I work on it as often as I can but just, you know, it would be nice if somehow more of the population was aware and could practice this."

P8 positions nonattachment as oppositional to control. She speaks to a need to work on moving away from control and towards nonattachment and also notes her experience that most people don't do this, but she indicates that she wishes they would. This differs from Participant 1 (P1), who positions nonattachment as oppositional to expectations of outcome:

"I'll go and I'll do that for you, not because next time he'll do it for me, but just because it's a nice thing to do for somebody that I love and it helps him."

This differs again from P3 who positions nonattachment as oppositional to judging experiences:

"...A place whereby events and life can sort of pass through you and by you without, uh, judgments or connecting to those events and thoughts."

These extracts represent a few of several constructs against which nonattachment was contrasted and do not necessarily represent understandings of nonattachment itself. Related to nonattachment itself versus its antonym, Participant 5 (P5) speaks to an understanding of nonattachment which more closely aligns with being 'unattached'. This construct is demarcated in Sahdra et al.'s (2010) research as distinct from nonattachment by way of being detached or withdrawn from one's environment.

"I look at a situation and be like I don't care anymore. I put too much emotion into it before where it drained me where now the drawback could be where I'm just so unattached that I may have taken it to the extreme or that there's a fine line."

P5 describes her sense of being unattached as something she invokes as a self-protection measure in stressful situations, like a tool in her armory. Participant 9 (P9) also speaks to the conflation of nonattachment and detachment:

"But I think for many years like nonattachment was kind of co-opted by our own like egoic tendencies and it's like 'Oh you know I'm all spiritual and nonattached' but really no, you're just a detached and like spiritual bypassing asshole."

These variances in definition and opposition are important, particularly when viewed from a Social Constructionist perspective because "Without discourse there is no social reality, and without understanding discourse we cannot understand our reality, our experiences, or ourselves" (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p. 2). Furthermore, the ambiguity around nonattachment's antonym may reinforce the lack of understanding regarding the concept. Antonymy, the mechanism of opposites in language, acts as a key discourse acquisition mechanism from childhood onward (Jones, 2007). Research supports the cognitive importance of antonymy noting that thought works in opposition (Cixous, 1997; Colston, 2019). In other words, if we are unclear on the antonym, we may also be unclear on the original concept.

Theme 4: 'Active Vs Passive Surrender – A Balancing Act'

This theme represents the difficulty of a balancing act associated with surrendering to the flow of life instead of resisting inevitable change and believing or trusting that things will be ok if you let go, accept, and allow (i.e., core principles of nonattachment). In the context of nonattachment, one must be open, but not too open. It is not a contradiction so much as finding the right narrow line to walk and was often labeled “intention” or “being intentional”. Participant 8 (P8) explains the surrender quality:

“I just know without a doubt that when you do surrender and stop resisting, things will turn out better than when you try to control things too much [...] realizing that maybe what I’m thinking is best isn’t what’s best and just kind of letting go and letting life sort of guide you.”

P8 expresses a solid belief when she says, “I just know without a doubt” that surrender to the flow of life will yield positive outcomes. She alludes to passive surrender here when she mentions letting life guide you. P8 conveys a position of being all in on nonattachment and how she sees it manifesting as surrender. This is further explained when she says:

“I think for me the way I think about nonattachment is in terms of surrender and letting go of resistance to what’s happening in my life and around me, and yeah, surrender’s my main word when it comes to nonattachment.”

This passive surrender to go with the flow of life was touched on but somewhat corralled into more of an active surrender by other participants. For example, consider this extract from Participant 10 (P10):

“I personally think that if you were looking around and not just floating around that you can see opportunities a little bit quicker and that you can create a better life for yourself.”

P10 offered this idea within the context of maintaining a sense of direction towards a goal but relinquishing a tight grip on a specific outcome. This is clarified when she says:

“I think it can be negative if you’re attached to nonattachment, so if you’re just floating through life, using it like, well, life will provide or what will be will be without having a conscious position in your life.”

In one of the few clear positionings of nonattachment as potentially negative in some situations, P10 offers interesting insight into how she feels that it could be taken too far, and that a certain amount of active engagement is still necessary. Finding the right balance was typically positioned as a work in progress. This is represented by Participant 7 (P7):

“...And it always comes back to self, coming back to center and paying attention and being intentional about those things, right? ... Those things are definitely tools and definitely get more refined through practice and in daily life.”

Here, P7 is describing his conscious use of intention as a tool for walking the line between active and passive surrender. He conveys a sense that a certain awareness or conscious intentionality is invoked, and these are practices requiring effort to become more refined. This idea loosely connects with those of Prebish (1975) and Hidas (1981) in which transcendence of ego states can involve effort, which may be an opening to the totality of the self, known in psychotherapy as surrender. However, it does not appear to be positioned as a painful shattering of sense of self, or as an adoption of emptiness, which is said to most characterize surrender (Hidas, 1981). Here, the effort seems more closely aligned with the practice of walking a tightrope. The intentionality and effort align with the idea of habituation, although clearly not in the involuntary sense as seen in bracing for impact, but in the practice of work one might associate with habit building such as cycling for cardiovascular health (Clark et al., 2007).

Discussion

This study sought to address a research gap by qualitatively exploring perceptions and personal understandings relating to the potential for nonattachment to foster mental health. The primary outcomes of the analysis indicated a general lack of consensus in understanding the definition of nonattachment, along with themes of (i) external forces clashing with internal knowing, (ii) a potentially implicit negativity associated with bracing for impact, (iii) and the difficult task of determining how completely one ought to embrace nonattachment. Each of these individually or in combination might contribute to an explanation of resistance to nonattachment. Additionally, the effects of researcher conceptualisation, coding, and meaning making must be acknowledged (Braun & Clarke, 2021). As a female immersed in the field of STEM, the first researcher is sensitive to concepts connecting with intuition (internal knowing), and systemic or cultural biases arising from patriarchal design, which may have informed meaning making within the first theme.

A novel finding was that in addition to a general lack of consensus regarding the definition of nonattachment, there are also undertones of potential negativity toward adopting an attitude of nonattachment in daily life. All participants referenced a conflict between external forces and internal knowing, which might be understood through the lens of adult development models. Criticized as too heavily influenced by social forces (Levenson et al., 2001), Sociogenic models challenge the premise that adult development occurs in universal developmental stages. They focus instead on pathways of adult development influenced by culture, social structure, and social interaction (Ardelt & Grunwald, 2018; Dannefer, 1984). The goal of adult development within Sociogenic models is to overcome social injustices to allow individuals to reach their full potential (Dannefer, 2015). From this perspective, institutions with enough power to influence thoughts and behaviors in individuals become the targets of advanced psychological development and therefore cannot be expected to cede power back to personal intuition, which is the crux of the conflict of theme 1. Sociogenic models have been criticized as being more Social Learning Theory than Adult Development Theory (Levenson et al., 2001). This is interesting in the context of the current research because where socialization teaches us how to function within our cultures, adult development may actually be the transcendence of the socialized or socially constructed self (Levenson et al., 2001). Arguably, this self is the very thing to which we are striving to become nonattached. Therefore, within a sociogenic framework, true nonattachment may not be attainable at all.

Adult Development Theory (Levenson & Crumpler, 1996) may also frame the difficulty of determining how completely one ought to embrace nonattachment. Conceptualized as active versus passive surrender, theme four generated insights related to navigating a fine line between choosing to let go completely or taking a more active role. Participants drew upon a variety of experiences and representations to illustrate their navigation, while using language such as 'surrender', 'go with the flow', 'accept' and 'allow' to signal thoughts around this concept. A qualitative link was also evident between how participants used passive surrender language and their age. That is, older participants tended to attenuate or confine their constructions of nonattachment less than younger participants; older participants used language that indicated more comfort with embracing nonattachment completely.

This remains consistent with existing research indicating nonattachment being positively associated with age (Mahlo & Windsor, 2021). It may therefore be that an ontogenetic framework of stage progression offers better insight into resistance to nonattachment. For example, Erikson (1963) outlines eight psychosocial crises to be resolved over a lifespan so that one may progress to the next developmental stage. Resolving the crisis of each stage contributes to all future crisis resolution. Failure to resolve any one crisis, therefore, may halt future stage progression. This framework is interesting because it fixes the first four stages in childhood and connects them firmly to traditional Western conceptualisations of attachment (e.g., Bowlby, 2004). This could account for some of the concept confusion related to nonattachment and its antonym. Additionally, crises are known to precipitate the therapeutic work of surrender (Hidas, 1981) and therefore crises corresponding with ontogenetic stages like those of Erikson (1963) may be catalysts for the adoption of nonattachment. This echoes findings by Whitehead et al. (2020) related to post-traumatic growth.

The findings represented by theme 2 also yielded a conceptual parallel between an involuntary state of neurological bracing for impact (hypervigilance) and mental or emotional bracing for impact. Participants frequently referenced time frames beyond the present and positioned 'current' mental states as directly influenced by prior experiences. Although this may constitute an involuntary state, comparable to a process like amygdala habituation (Kim et al., 2019), it may also be a changeable state, like neuroplasticity: the brain's ability to adapt and

modify neural pathways through thoughts, actions, and experiences (Constandi, 2016). If so, it becomes a question of how to encourage or facilitate the practice of adopting a nonattached attitude or making it habitual. This could be difficult because as noted, participants generally positioned nonattachment as a helpful practice for negative more so than positive situations.

Habit Theory maps onto a wide variety of thoughts, behaviors, and processes (Clark et al., 2007), although generally, the process of habit forming occurs through a gradual shift towards intentional automatic processes and away from conscious cognitive control (Nilsen et al., 2012). Conscious thought and habit can act together to support intentional changes (Clark et al., 2007) much like exercising to get fit, or making better nutritional choices to become healthier. These are practices and involve consistent effort, which participants signaled by employing language such as ‘striving’ and ‘work’ in relation to adopting nonattachment. None of the participants discussed an attitude of nonattachment as something easy, or as a default position. On the contrary, most spoke to external socialization factors as their primary guidelines for how to operate in the world. Nonattachment was something to be worked towards or habituated. The challenge in using Habit Theory to facilitate the adoption of nonattachment is that “habitual behaviors are inextricably linked to the cues or contextual features that give rise to them” (Hagger, 2018, p. 4). That is, habits are most successfully adopted with contextual consistency. The variety of situations in which an attitude of nonattachment might be adopted is extensive. This could offer a partial account for why an attitude of nonattachment may be so difficult to adopt.

Analysis also revealed a general lack of consistency in understanding the definition of nonattachment (i.e., theme 3). While this has already been discussed within the context of the lexical paradigm, it is worth revisiting Action Identification Theory (AIT; Parkin et al., 2015) to consider whether it might yield any further explanatory benefit. AIT holds that the identities to which one subscribes in combination with their understanding of an action, such as embracing nonattachment, and their ability to maintain the action, are the determinants of whether that action is produced (Parkin et al., 2015). Within the current context, it could therefore be that due to individually constructed definitions of nonattachment, individuals cannot truly adopt it. That is, unless an individual’s understanding of what it means to embrace nonattachment is accurate, they may be unable to do so. The challenge here is that AIT assumes a realist perspective of a knowable truth in the definition of nonattachment. The solution to this cannot lie in an ontological shift towards realism because of the clear variety in conveyed understandings of the concept.

Along similarly challenging lines stands the balancing act of how completely one ought to embrace nonattachment. As discussed, too little may negate the benefits, but too much may steer us dangerously close to a definition of asceticism the world has moved on from, and risk too passive a state of surrender. In fact, even within the cultural context of ancient Eastern contemplative traditions – where emphasis was placed on a de-centred conception of the self and its corresponding objects of attachment – there are documented concerns that an over or incorrect adoption of nonattachment could lead to nihilistic or nonchalant attitudes (Shonin et al., 2014). Therefore, as evidenced by theme 4, given the fact that the study was conducted in a country which largely follows an individualistic culture, it is perhaps unsurprising that participants were aware of the risks associated with overly embracing nonattachment. The tricky task of navigating the ‘right amount’ of a behavior, virtue, or attitude is not new. Eastern philosophy, through Confucius, offers the principle of *Jen tau* meaning ‘the way of man’ to describe the right balance to strike in any given behavior or virtue (Lawrenz, 2021). For Confucius, to be truly virtuous, one must be ready to release cravings should one be unable to satisfy them, which is said to be much better than clinging. In Western philosophy, through Aristotle, we are offered the principle of the Golden Mean. Essentially, we must all face a choice about how completely to embrace a behavior or virtue, and the right choice is the mean of excess and deficiency (Lawrenz, 2021). However, the mean remains relative to each individual and does not exist as an objective (realist) knowable absolute (Lawrenz, 2021). While this favors a constructionist or relativist theoretical framework for discovery over a realist or essentialist approach, it fails to provide an explanation of resistance to nonattachment beyond essentially positioning the construct as objectively unknowable.

Findings from this study also suggest that participants harbored a degree of implicit negativity toward nonattachment due to a state of mental or emotional hypervigilance. These findings offer unique and novel insights into the ways that a seemingly positive construct might be experienced in a negative manner due to the perceived need to ‘brace for impact’. While embracing nonattachment might feel right, good, or necessary, it remains a behavior or attitude which is discussed as most important for any negative situations on the horizon. Furthermore, little practical guidance exists to support people on their path to the right amount of nonattachment adoption. The

fine line is hard to find, despite existing research linking cognitive and experiential pathways to the adoption of nonattachment (Whitehead et al., 2020).

Strengths and Limitations

While critics have argued that qualitative research can leave out contextual sensitivities and focus too heavily on participant meaning and experiences (Silverman, 2014), this was mitigated to a certain extent by a more critically analytic theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2021), which connected interview data to existing theory and research to account for context. As with most qualitative studies, concerns around sample size, and therefore generalisability, arise (Harry & Lipsky, 2014; Thompson, 2011). For this reason, the current study may be considered preliminary. Qualitative researchers have argued, however, that the unit of attention as the phenomenon under investigation is more meaningful than the number of participants, and therefore the sample is arguably much larger than it appears (Darlington & Scott, 2002). Lastly, with a qualitative approach, participants themselves have greater influence over the nature of analysis (Rahman, 2016), which was appropriate within the context of a search for explanatory themes.

Another potential limitation of the study included the participant sample being solicited from a somewhat narrowly defined community. Specifically, members of the UK yogic community were targeted for interview on the premise that they may be more likely than others to have previously considered the topic. This limits generalisability and future research may benefit from investigating a more varied cohort base to limit the potential for sample selection bias. Furthermore, all interviews were conducted online instead of in person. Research on the true efficacy of online qualitative data collection still remains in its infancy (Archibald et al., 2019), and therefore answers may have been skewed by the environment or platform of exchange. Given that the scope of the current research had been limited to exploring resistance to nonattachment, future research may benefit from investigating affinity or desire to embrace nonattachment.

A critical element of Reflexive Thematic Analysis involves taking into consideration the researcher's effect on the process (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Guest et al., 2012). Both authors of this study have undergone yoga and meditation teacher training and subscribe to the general values and principles associated with each. Therefore, notwithstanding the previously outlined steps taken to maximize methodological rigor and validity, this may have informed the generation of codes and code labels where distinct constructs such as surrender often overlapped with nonattachment.

Conclusion, Implications, and Future Directions

Findings of concept confusion and apparent negative implicit bias towards nonattachment have important implications for the wider adoption of nonattachment, and its employment in applied settings. While nonattachment holds a variety of key benefits for mental and physical health, findings from this study suggest that it may be important to assess people's personal understandings of the concept to aid its adoption. Key findings included a general inconsistency in understanding the concept, evidenced by a variation in conveyed understandings. Another key finding was the participants' apparent implicit negativity towards nonattachment, whilst also acknowledging its benefits for accommodating change. These findings have important implications for the wider adoption and application of nonattachment in applied settings.

Key implications suggest that while people may realize the benefits of a more nonattached attitude for mental health, this does not necessarily attract wider adoption. This may be a function of varied understandings, or implicit negative biases toward a loosened attitude of control. Another interesting finding was that age appears to support an easier adoption of nonattachment. Future research may investigate whether this is a function of time, age, life experience, wisdom, or other criteria. Future research may also benefit from investigating affinity toward nonattachment, or what promotes a desire to embrace it. Additionally, given the importance of being able to nurture one's own mental health due to limited public resources, the current study findings may be used to guide self-reflections on nonattachment along with its meaning and potential benefits.

Acknowledgements

We thank the participants who gave so vulnerably and kindly of their time and experiences, and the reviewers of this study.

Funding

The authors received neither financial nor non-financial support for the research (including data acquisition) and/or authorship and/or publication of this article.

Author contribution

Lindsay TREMBLAY: conceptualization, design, methodology, investigation, project administration, data management, formal analysis, interpretation, writing original draft, writing review and editing.

William VAN GORDON: conceptualization, supervision, writing review and editing.

Declaration of interest statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the University of Derby, College of Health, Psychology and Social Care Research Committee research authorisation number: ETH2021-4458.

All participants engaged in the research voluntarily and anonymously.

The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Their data are stored in coded materials and databases without personal data.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting this study's findings are available to the public.

We have policies in place to manage and keep data secure.

ORCID

Lindsay TREMBLAY  <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-0166-2451>

William VAN GORDON  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5648-3043>

References

- Ainsworth, M. D. S. (1978). *Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; Distributed by Halsted Press Division of Wiley.
- Ainsworth, M. D. S. (2015). *Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation* (Classic edition). *Psychology Press and Routledge classic editions*. Routledge.
- Archibald, M. M., Ambagtsheer, R. C., Casey, M. G., & Lawless, M. (2019). Using Zoom Videoconferencing for Qualitative Data Collection: Perceptions and Experiences of Researchers and Participants. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 18, Article 160940691987459. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919874596>
- Ardelt, M., & Grunwald, S. (2018). The Importance of Self-Reflection and Awareness for Human Development in Hard Times. *Research in Human Development*, 15(3–4), 187–199. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15427609.2018.1489098>
- Baker, C., & Kirk-Wade, E. (2023). *Mental health statistics: prevalence, services and funding in England*. House of Commons Library
- Barrows, P. D., Richardson, M., Hamlin, I., & Van Gordon, W. (2022). Nature Connectedness, Nonattachment, and Engagement with Nature's Beauty Predict Pro-Nature Conservation Behavior. *Ecopsychology*, 14(2), 83–91. <https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2021.0036>
- Bem, D. J. (1972). Self-Perception Theory. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 6, 1–62. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(08\)60024-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60024-6)
- Bowlby, J. (1982). Attachment and loss: Retrospect and prospect. *The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 52(4), 664–678. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.1982.tb01456.x>
- Bowlby, J. (1998). *Attachment and loss*. Pimlico.
- Bowlby, R. (2004). *Fifty years of attachment theory*. Karnac Books.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589–597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic Analysis: A practical guide to understanding and doing* Sage.
- Burr, V. (2015). *Social constructionism* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Cebolla, A., Galiana, L., Campos, D., Oliver, A., Soler, J., Demarzo, M., Baños, R. M., Feliu-Soler, A., & García-

- Campayo, J. (2018). How Does Mindfulness Work? Exploring a Theoretical Model Using Samples of Meditators and Non-meditators. *Mindfulness*, *9*(3), 860–870. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-017-0826-7>
- Chao, S.H., & Chen, P.H. (2013). The reliability and validity of the Chinese version of the Nonattachment Scale: Reliability, validity, and its relationship with mental health. *Bulletin of Educational Psychology*, *45*(1), 121–139.
- Cheung, K., Taillieu, T., Turner, S., Fortier, J., Sareen, J., MacMillan, H. L., Boyle, M. H., & Afifi, T. O. (2017). Relationship and community factors related to better mental health following child maltreatment among adolescents. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *70*, 377–387. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.06.026>
- Chio, F. H. N., Lai, M. H. C., & Mak, W. W. S. (2018). Development of the Nonattachment Scale-Short Form (NAS-SF) Using Item Response Theory. *Mindfulness*, *9*(4), 1299–1308. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-017-0874-z>
- Cixous, H. (1997). Sorties: Out and out: Attacks/ways out/forays. *The logic of the gift: Towards an ethic of generosity*, 148–173.
- Clark, F., Sanders, K., Carlson, M., Blanche, E., & Jackson, J. (2007). Synthesis of Habit Theory. *OTJR: Occupational Therapy Journal of Research*, *27*(1_suppl), 7S-23S. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15394492070270S103>
- Coffey, K. A., & Hartman, M. (2008). Mechanisms of Action in the Inverse Relationship Between Mindfulness and Psychological Distress. *Complementary Health Practice Review*, *13*(2), 79–91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1533210108316307>
- Colston, H. L. (2019). *How language makes meaning: Embodiment and conjoined antonymy* / Herbert L. Colston. Cambridge University Press.
- Costandi, M. (2016). *Neuroplasticity. The MIT Press essential knowledge series*. The MIT Press.
- Dannefer, D. (1984). Adult Development and Social Theory: A Paradigmatic Reappraisal. *American Sociological Review*, *49*(1), 100–116. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095560>
- Dannefer, D. (2015). Right in Front of Us: Taking Everyday Life Seriously in the Study of Human Development. *Research in Human Development*, *12*(3–4), 209–216. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15427609.2015.1068043>
- Darlington, Y., & Scott, D. (2002). Qualitative research in practice. Stories from the Field 2nd Edition. *Journal of Orthopaedic Nursing*, *6*(4), 237–238. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1361-3111\(02\)00100-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1361-3111(02)00100-0)
- Dawkins, R. (2008). *The God delusion* (1st Mariner Books ed.). Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Department of Health (2011). *No health without mental health: A cross-government mental health outcomes strategy for people of all ages*. Retrieved February 23, 2022, from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/215808/dh_123993.pdf
- Derricourt, R. M. (2021). *Creating God: The birth and growth of major religions* / Robin Derricourt. Manchester University Press.
- Domhoff, G.W. (2018). Who Rules America? : Power and Politics. In D. Grusky, D. B. Grusky, & S. Szelenyi (Eds.), *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and foundational readings in race, class, and gender* (pp. 112–117). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429494468-12>
- Dvorak, R. D., Lamis, D. A., & Malone, P. S. (2013). Alcohol use, depressive symptoms, and impulsivity as risk factors for suicide proneness among college students. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, *149*(1–3), 326–334. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2013.01.046>
- Elphinstone, B., Sahdra, B. K., & Ciarrochi, J. (2020). Living well by letting go: Reliability and validity of a brief measure of nonattachment. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/ew4ns>
- Elphinstone, B., & Whitehead, R. (2019). The benefits of being less fixated on self and stuff: Nonattachment, reduced insecurity, and reduced materialism. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *149*, 302–308. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.06.019>
- Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and society*. Norton.
- Feliu-Soler, A., Soler, J., Luciano, J. V., Cebolla, A., Elices, M., Demarzo, M., & García-Campayo, J. (2016). Psychometric Properties of the Spanish Version of the Nonattachment Scale (NAS) and Its Relationship with Mindfulness, Decentering, and Mental Health. *Mindfulness*, *7*(5), 1156–1169. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-016-0558-0>
- Finn, R. D. (2009). *Asceticism in the Graeco-Roman world. Key themes in ancient history*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ghent, E. (1990). Masochism, Submission, Surrender. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, *26*(1), 108–136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00107530.1990.10746643>
- Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2012). *Applied Thematic Analysis*. Sage.
- Gupta, K. & Agrawal, J. (2022). An empirical study of ancient wisdom. Effect of Anasakti (Non-Attachment) and Ahamkara (Ego) on well-being amongst Indians. *European Journal of Mental Health*, *17*(3), 78–95. <https://doi.org/10.5708/EJMH.17.2022.3.6>
- Hagerty, B. M., Lynch-Sauer, J., Patusky, K. L., Bouwsema, M., & Collier, P. (1992). Sense of belonging: A vital mental health concept. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, *6*(3), 172–177. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0883-9417\(92\)90028-H](https://doi.org/10.1016/0883-9417(92)90028-H)
- Hagger, M. S. (2018). Habit and Physical Activity: Theoretical Advances, Practical Implications, and Agenda for Future Research. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/4ge57>
- Hamedani, M. Y. G., & Markus, H. R. (2019). Understanding Culture Clashes and Catalyzing Change: A Culture Cycle Approach. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *10*, 700. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00700>
- Hạnh, N. (1999). *The heart of the Buddha's teaching: Transforming suffering into peace, joy & liberation the four noble truths, the noble eightfold path, and other basic Buddhist teachings* (1st Broadway Books trade pbk. ed.). Broadway Books.
- Harry, B., & Lipsky, M. (2014). Qualitative Research on Special Education Teacher Preparation. In M. McCray, T. Brownell, & B. Lignugaris/Kraft (Eds.), *Handbook of research on special education teacher preparation* (pp. 445–460). Routledge.
- Hidas, A. (1981). *Psychotherapy and surrender: A psychospiritual perspective*. <https://www.atpweb.org/jtparchive/trps-13-81-01-027.pdf>
- Hill, D. L. (2006). Sense of belonging as connectedness, American Indian worldview, and mental health. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, *20*(5), 210–216. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnu.2006.04.003>
- Hitchens, C. (2008). *God is not great: How religion poisons everything* / Christopher Hitchens. Atlantic Books.

- Ho, C. Y., Ben, C. L., & Mak, W. W. (2022). Nonattachment mediates the associations between mindfulness, well-being, and psychological distress: A meta-analytic structural equation modeling approach. *Clinical Psychology Review, 95*, Article 102175.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2022.102175>
- Horan, R. (2011). Spirituality. In Mark A. Runco, M. A., & Pritzker, S. R. (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Creativity* (2nd ed.) pp 364–372. Academic Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-375038-9.00206-5>
- Jones, S. (2007). ‘Opposites’ in discourse: A comparison of antonym use across four domains. *Journal of Pragmatics, 39*(6), 1105–1119.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2006.11.019>
- Joss, D., Lazar, S. W., & Teicher, M. H. (2020). Nonattachment Predicts Empathy, Rejection Sensitivity, and Symptom Reduction After a Mindfulness-Based Intervention Among Young Adults with a History of Childhood Maltreatment. *Mindfulness, 11*(4), 975–990.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-020-01322-9>
- Kim, Y. J., van Rooij, S. J. H., Ely, T. D., Fani, N., Ressler, K. J., Jovanovic, T., & Stevens, J. S. (2019). Association between posttraumatic stress disorder severity and amygdala habituation to fearful stimuli. *Depression and Anxiety, 36*(7), 647–658.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/da.22928>
- Kimble, M. O., Fleming, K., & Bennion, K. A. (2013). Contributors to hypervigilance in a military and civilian sample. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 28*(8), 1672–1692.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260512468319>
- Kleshchova, O., Rieder, J. K., Grinband, J., & Weierich, M. R. (2019). Resting amygdala connectivity and basal sympathetic tone as markers of chronic hypervigilance. *Psychoneuroendocrinology, 102*, 68–78.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychneu.2018.11.036>
- Lasswell, H. D., & Kaplan, A. (2017). *Power And Society*. Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315127156>
- Lawrenz, J. (2021). Confucius, Aristotle, and the Golden Mean: A Diptych on Ethical Virtues. *The European Legacy, 26*(2), 149–169.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770.2020.1823622>
- Levenson, M. R., Aldwin, C. M., & Cupertino, A. P. (2001). Transcending the self: Towards a Liberative Model of adult development. *Maturidade & Velhice: Um Enfoque Multidisciplinar*, 99–116.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254912263_Transcending_the_Self_Toward_a_Liberative_Model_of_Adult_Development
- Levenson, M. R., & Crumpler, C. A. (1996). Three Models of Adult Development. *Human Development, 39*(3), 135–149.
<https://doi.org/10.1159/000278429>
- Levitt, H. M., Bamberg, M., Creswell, J. W., Frost, D. M., Josselson, R., & Suárez-Orozco, C. (2018). Journal article reporting standards for qualitative primary, qualitative meta-analytic, and mixed methods research in psychology: The APA Publications and Communications Board task force report. *American Psychologist, 73*(1), 26–46.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000151>
- Mahlo, L., & Windsor, T. D. (2021). Older and more mindful? Age differences in mindfulness components and well-being. *Aging & Mental Health, 25*(7), 1320–1331.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2020.1734915>
- Markus, H. R., & Conner, A. (2014). *Clash! How to Thrive in a Multicultural World*. Penguin.
- Morris, M. W., Chiu, C., & Liu, Z. (2015). Polycultural psychology. *Annual Review of Psychology, 66*, 631–659.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010814-015001>
- NHS (2017). *NHS Mental Health Dashboard*. NHS choices. Retrieved February 23, 2022, from <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-mental-health-dashboard/>
- Nilsen, P., Roback, K., Broström, A., & Ellström, P.E. (2012). Creatures of habit: Accounting for the role of habit in implementation research on clinical behaviour change. *Implementation Science, 7*, Article 53.
<https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-7-53>
- Parkin, S. S., Jarman, M. S., & Vallacher, R. R. (2015). On Being Mindful: What Do People Think They’re Doing? *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 9*(1), 31–44.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12156>
- Phillips, N., & Hardy, C. (2002). *Discourse Analysis* (1st ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Prebish, C. S. (1975). [Review of *Cutting through Spiritual Materialism*, by C. Trungpa, J. Baker, M. Casper]. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion, 43*(2), 337–338.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1461218>
- Rahman, M. S. (2016). The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches and Methods in Language “Testing and Assessment” Research: A Literature Review. *Journal of Education and Learning, 6*(1), Article 102.
<https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v6n1p102>
- Ross, C. E. (1990). Religion and Psychological Distress. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 29*(2), 236–245.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1387431>
- Russell, J. A., Fernández-Dols, J.M., Manstead, A. S., & Wellenkamp, J. C. (2013). *Everyday Conceptions of Emotion: An Introduction to the Psychology, Anthropology and Linguistics of Emotion*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Sahdra, B., Ciarrochi, J., & Parker, P. (2016). Nonattachment and mindfulness: Related but distinct constructs. *Psychological Assessment, 28*(7), 819–829.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/pas0000264>
- Sahdra, B. K., Ciarrochi, J., Parker, P. D., Marshall, S., & Heaven, P. (2015). Empathy and nonattachment independently predict peer nominations of prosocial behavior of adolescents. *Frontiers in Psychology, 6*, Article 263.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00263>
- Sahdra, B. K., Shaver, P. R., & Brown, K. W. (2010). A scale to measure nonattachment: A Buddhist complement to Western research on attachment and adaptive functioning. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 92*(2), 116–127.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00223890903425960>
- Sethi, M. (2009). Chastity and desire: Representing women in Jainism. *South Asian History and Culture, 1*(1), 42–59.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19472490903387209>
- Shonin, E., & Van Gordon, W. (2013). Searching for the present moment. *Mindfulness, 5*, 105–107.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s12671-013-0248-0>
- Shonin, E., Van Gordon W., & Griffiths, M. D. (2014). The emerging role of Buddhism in clinical psychology: Towards effective integration. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, 6*, 123–137.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0035859>
- Silverman, D. (2014). *Interpreting qualitative data* (Fifth edition). Sage.

- Simonsson, O., Fisher, S., & Martin, M. (2021). Awareness and Experience of Mindfulness in Britain. *Sociological Research Online*, 26(4), 833–852.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1360780420980761>
- Sosa, E. (2017). *Epistemology*. Princeton University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400883059>
- Tran, U. S., Cebolla, A., Glück, T. M., Soler, J., Garcia-Campayo, J., & Moy, T. von (2014). The serenity of the meditating mind: A cross-cultural psychometric study on a two-factor higher order structure of mindfulness, its effects, and mechanisms related to mental health among experienced meditators. *PLoS ONE*, 9(10), e110192.
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0110192>
- UkPublicSpending.co.uk. (2022). *What is the total UK public spending?* Charts of Current Spending. Retrieved February 23, 2022, from
https://www.ukpublicspending.co.uk/current_spending
- Vallacher, R. R., & Wegner, D. M. (1987). What do people think they're doing? Action identification and human behavior. *Psychological Review*, 94(1), 3–15.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.94.1.3>
- Van Gordon, W., Shonin, E., Dunn, T. J., Garcia-Campayo, J., & Griffiths, M. D. (2017). Meditation awareness training for the treatment of fibromyalgia syndrome: A randomized controlled trial. *British Journal of Health Psychology*, 22(1), 186–206.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/bjhp.12224>
- Van Gordon, W., Shonin, E., & Griffiths, M. D. (2016). Meditation Awareness Training for individuals with fibromyalgia syndrome: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of participant's experiences. *Mindfulness*, 7(2), 409–419.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-015-0458-8>
- Van Gordon, W., Shonin, E., Dunn, T. J., Saphiang, S., Kotera, Y., Garcia-Campayo, J., & Sheffield, D. (2019). Exploring Emptiness and its Effects on Non-attachment, Mystical Experiences, and Psycho-spiritual Wellbeing: A Quantitative and Qualitative Study of Advanced Meditators. *Explore*, 15(4), 261–272.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.explore.2018.12.003>
- Wang, S.Y., Wong, Y. J., & Yeh, K.H. (2016). Relationship Harmony, Dialectical Coping, and Nonattachment: Chinese Indigenous Well-Being and Mental Health. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 44(1), 78–108.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000015616463>
- Whitehead, R. (2019). *Nonattachment and nonattachment to self: The role of letting go in optimal psychological health*. Retrieved February 23, 2022, from https://researchbank.swinburne.edu.au/file/903421cb-905f-4118-a417-7ce9d2fe331b/1/richard_whitehead_thesis.pdf
- Whitehead, R., Bates, G., & Elphinstone, B., (2020). Growing by Letting Go: Nonattachment and Mindfulness as Qualities of Advanced Psychological Development. *Journal of Adult Development*, 27(1), 12–22.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10804-018-09326-5>
- Whitehead, R., Bates, G., Elphinstone, B., Yang, Y., & Murray, G. (2018a). Letting Go of Self: The Creation of the Nonattachment to Self Scale. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, Article 2544.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02544>
- Whitehead, R., Bates, G., & Elphinstone, B., (2018b). Stories of Suffering and Growth: An Investigation of the Lived Experience of Nonattachment. *Contemporary Buddhism*, 19(2), 448–475.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14639947.2018.1572311>
- Willig, C., & Stainton-Rogers, W. (2008). Introduction. In Willig, C., & Stainton-Rogers, W. (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology* (pp. 1-12). Sage.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848607927>
- World Health Organization. (2022). *Global Health Estimates: Life Expectancy and leading causes of death and disability*. Retrieved February 23, 2022, from <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/mortality-and-global-health-estimates>
- Yoon, S. A., & Weierich, M. R. (2016). Salivary biomarkers of neural hypervigilance in trauma-exposed women. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 63, 17–25.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psyneuen.2015.09.007>
- Zuckerman, P. (2012). *Faith no more: Why people reject religion*. Oxford University Press.