Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
The Mindful Self: 
Sense of Self and Health-Promoting Lifestyle Behaviours 
among Thai College Women 

A thesis presented in fulfillment 
of the requirements for the degree of 

Doctor of Philosophy 
in 
Nursing 

At Massey University, 
New Zealand. 

Pitsini Mongkhonsiri 
2007
Wellness educators have faced a great challenge to develop strategies to move people toward the adoption of positive lifestyle behaviours. This research explores concepts of self and the impact of Thai culture on the motivation of young college women to engage in health-promoting lifestyle behaviours (HPLBs) in the context of northeastern Thailand. A sequential mixed methods design enables an exploration of the relationships among sense of coherence, identity status, and HPLBs in the first phase, and an inductive analysis of the impact of Thai cultural context in the second phase. In study A, three instruments: the Health-Promoting Lifestyle Behaviors Profile II (HPLP II), the Extended Version of the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (EOM-EIS), and the Orientation to Life Questionnaire (SOC-29), were used with 350 senior college women. Sense of Coherence was significantly correlated with achieving a sense of identity, lessening diffusion identity and engaging in health-promoting behaviours. Although a considerable proportion of the variance (26.7%) for engaging in HPLBs was accounted for by SOC, identity achievement, and identity moratorium, the magnitude of the unexplained variance was considerable. This led to inductive exploration of other variables influencing HPLBs in Study B. By data-driven thematic analysis, the Model of the Mindful Self emerged from in-depth interviews with 25 college women. The model describes three main themes: (a) the cultural background and the surrounding ongoing influences which impact on the development of Thai women’s sense of self and their health-related behaviours, (b) the sense of self and identity formation in the Thai context, and (c) the health-related behaviours that stem from the sense of self. Sense of self and its behaviours are socially constructed within the specific culture in which individuals are embedded. The social phenomena and research outcomes are interpreted under the lens of social constructionism. The knowledge generated by this study provides guidance for teaching about health promotion in Thai undergraduate nursing programmes and also provides a basis for initiating health-promoting programmes based on the individual’s sense of self for female adolescents in Thailand.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A hundred times a day I remind myself that my inner and outer life depends on the labors of other men, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the measure as I have received and am still receiving.

- Albert Einstein

I have to acknowledge first, the Thai college women who willingly participated and shared their world views and experiences in this research. Without their participation this research could not have been accomplished, and even I, a Thai woman living in the Thai context, have had the opportunity to deeply learn to know my own self and my Thai context by listening to, and talking with, these Thai women. I hope that the outcomes of the study will benefit them in the way that it provides new insight to nursing and education in Thailand.

I express my gratitude to Professor Julie Boddy, Professor Steve LaGrow, and Associate Professor Dr. Khanitta Nuntaboot, my supervisors, for their wisdom and support all along this journey of my dissertation. From the time and guidance which they devoted to me, I have learnt a lot. I appreciate Associate Professor Cheryl Benn and Professor Jenny Carryer for their expert advice at the time I developed my research proposal and made sense of the way of knowing. Thank you to Lesley Batten, Dr. Charmaine Hamilton, Dr. Regina Pernice, Dr. Suzanne Phibbs, Dr. Martin Woods, and Dr. Gretchen Good for their encouragement and support. A special thank you goes to John Wyatt and Karen Stanley for their guidance in improving the English grammar and expressions in this thesis. I also appreciate Dr. Denise Wilson for her reflection from her experience of conducting research on women’s health as well; her work has inspired me during my writing of this thesis.
A special and sincere thank you must go to my respected brother, Mr. Suntipong Nippanont, who devoted his free time to helping me on translation. Words can never express the gratitude I have for his assistance. Also my appreciation has to go to Ajarn Peerapong Boonsawasdgulchai and Ajarn Sumuttana Kaewmm for their guidance during making sense of the quantitative data of the study.

To my beloved family – Kriengsak, my husband, Ghochaporn and Tawan, my daughter and son – who have been alongside and patient with me during the long journey of my work life since they have met me. I am always conscious of their love, support, encouragement and patience. I am grateful to my dad and mom, and my brothers and sisters, Mr. Pipat, Ajarn Sumalee, Mr. Kasidit, and Mrs. Pawanrat, for their love and support directly and indirectly at all times. Without them I would never have been gone this far in achieving success.

A sincere thank you must also go to all of my colleagues at the Boromarajonani College of Nursing, Udonthani for their encouragement, and to all of officers, colleagues, and Thai friends at the School of Health Sciences, Massey University for their sharing, goodwill, and support during the time of my PhD study. I will always appreciate their friendship and assistance given to me.

Finally, I need to acknowledge The Royal Thai Government for the Royal Thai Scholarship, and Massey University for providing me with the opportunity to learn, which assisted in the completion of this thesis. Thank you.
Pāli-Sanskrit

A
Abhijāta-putta or atijāta-putta: superior-born son
Anatta or Anatman: without self entity or empty, state of being not self
Anicca: impermanence, transience, having the nature to arise and pass away
Anūjāta-putta: like-born son
Avajāta-putta: inferior-born son
Arogya: non-diseased-ness
Atta, Bhava, and Karma: self, condition, and the law of cause and effect

B
Brahmavihāras: holy abiding, sublime states of mind, the Four Abodes of the Buddha:
Mettā: loving-kindness, friendliness, goodwill
Karunā: compassion
Muditā: sympathetic joy, altruistic joy
Upekkhā: equanimity, indifference, neutrality, poise
(Thais pronounce Oo-baehk-khaa)

D
Dāna: giving, generosity, charity, or benefaction
Dukkha: of suffering and unsatisfactory nature

K
Katānā or Katanyu: gratitude
Katavedī or Katavedi: to offer reciprocal kindness to one's benefactors
Khan-ti: to be patient

M
Madhyama pratipad, Majjhima patipada: the Middle Path

P
Pañña: discriminative wisdom
Puja: to worship

S
Sīla: moral virtue, the basic codes of conduct recommended by the Buddha for his followers, precepts
Samadhi: concentration or one-pointedness of mind, meditation
Samsāra: transition, conditioned existence, the rebirth cycle
Sati: mindfulness, recollection

U
Uppamahoti Annayoung: happiness for living parents
Thai

B
Bplohng-Dtohk or Bplohng: make right understanding of the nature of things and let things be
Bun: merits
Bun khun: total benefits that another has bestowed upon one

C
Chaow phoa: a male spirit guardian

D
Doo lae tua eng: to take care of one’s self
Doo tua eng: to look at one’s self

G
Gruoad nam: to pour water through one’s hand during a sermon after making merits to monks

H
Hai wela tua eng: to give time for one’s self

J
Jad karn tua eng: to manage one’s self
Jai ron: hot mind
Jai yen: calm mind, cool mind

K
Kalatesa: time and place
Kidd buab, Kid dee: to think positive, to think good thoughts
Kidd eng tam eng: think and do things by one’s self autonomously
Kooy gubb tua eng: to talk to one’s self, self-talk
Kreng-jai: to be considerate

L
La: to let things be, to let go, to detach
La iithi: to let go one’s thought or one’s stubborn

M
Mai Mi Roak Pai Khai Jeb: no diseases, harms, fevers, and pains
Mor-Din-Daeng: Khon Kaen University
Munn jai nai tua eng: to be self-confident
Pen baeb yhang: to be a role model
Pen tua khong tua eng: being one’s self
Pii, nong, loong, paa, naa, aa: older sister/brother, younger sister/brother, uncle, or aunt. These are pronouns to call others in a seniority-oriented Thai culture.
Ploay-wang: let things be without forming attachment with them
Poomjai nai tua eng: to be proud of one’s self
Puao-dee: balance, just-right manner
Pueng tua eng: to be self-reliant, self-reliance
Pure: for

Rak tua eng: to love one’s self
Roo koon-ka tua eng: to know one’s self-value
Roo tua eng: knowing one’s self

Sabai-jai: eased mind, happy mind

Taang Saii Klang: the Middle Path
Tam Bun: to make merits
Tam Dee: to do good deeds
Tam Jai: to accept the way things are
Tam Jai Pen Klang or Klaang-klaang: to be neutral, keep in the middle
Tam puer krob krua: to do things for family
Tam puer sung kom: to do things for society
Tam puer tua eng: to do things for one’s self
Thamm tua eng: to ask one’s self
Tua eng: Self

Wang choei: to be stoic
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ i
Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................ ii
Glossary ................................................................................................................................... iv
Table of Contents ..................................................................................................................... vii
List of Figures .......................................................................................................................... xii
List of Tables ........................................................................................................................... xiii

PART I

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION
  Background to the Research ................................................................................................. 1
  Health Promotion and Health-Promoting Lifestyle Behaviours ......................................... 5
  Thailand and the Northeastern Region ................................................................................... 9
  Women’s Health in Thailand ................................................................................................. 11
  Purpose of the Research ...................................................................................................... 14
  Conclusion ............................................................................................................................. 16
  The Thesis Layout ............................................................................................................... 17

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW
  Health-Promoting Lifestyle Behaviours .............................................................................. 19
  Sense of self, Identity, and Health-Related Behaviours ...................................................... 24
  Sense of Coherence and Well-being .................................................................................... 29
  Conclusion ............................................................................................................................. 34

CHAPTER 3 CONSTRUCTING AN APPROPRIATE METHODOLOGY
  Paradigmatic Assumptions ................................................................................................. 36
  Social Constructionism ........................................................................................................ 38
  Mixed Methods Research Design ....................................................................................... 39
    The Research Protocol ...................................................................................................... 43
    Ethical Considerations ...................................................................................................... 44
    Making Influences from Mixed Methods Research ....................................................... 45
  Conclusion ............................................................................................................................. 46
CHAPTER 4 STUDY A: METHOD DESIGN AND RESULTS

Study A: Prediction of Health-Promoting Lifestyle Behaviours .......... 47
Instruments ......................................................................................... 47

   The Health-Promoting Lifestyle Profile II (HPLP II) .......... 47
   The Sense of Coherence Questionnaire (SOC) ......................... 48
   The Extended Version of the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (EOM-EIS) ....................................................... 48

The Pilot Study .................................................................................... 49

   Aims ..................................................................................................... 49
   The Pilot Participants and Process ................................................. 49
   Reliability .......................................................................................... 50

Study A .................................................................................................. 50

   Participants ....................................................................................... 50
   Data collection .................................................................................. 51
   Data analysis .................................................................................... 52
   Demographic Data ........................................................................... 53
   Descriptive Statistics of the Variables ........................................... 54
   Checking Assumptions for Multiple Regression ......................... 55
   The Spearman’s rho Correlations of the Variables ....................... 55
   Results from Multiple Regression .................................................. 58
   Analyses Based on Major .................................................................. 61

Discussion of Study A .......................................................................... 62

Limitations of Study A ........................................................................ 65

Conclusion ........................................................................................... 66

PART II

CHAPTER 5 STUDY B: DESIGN, METHODS AND RESULTS

Study B: An Interpretive Qualitative Study .......................................... 68

   Participants ....................................................................................... 69
   Data collection: In-Depth Interviews ................................................ 70
   Data analysis: Thematic Analysis ..................................................... 71

   Open Coding ..................................................................................... 72
   Developing Themes and Sub-Themes ............................................... 75
   Moving from Coding to Interpretation ............................................. 79

viii
Establishing Research Trustworthiness ................................................................. 83
Conclusion .............................................................................................................. 84

CHAPTER 6 COMMON CULTURAL BACKGROUND AND SURROUNDING INFLUENCES
Buddhism as a Strong Root in Thai Culture ......................................................... 86
   The Three Characteristics and Four Noble Truths ............................................. 87
   The Middle Path ................................................................................................. 90
Morality and good deeds in Buddhism ................................................................. 91
Significance of Health in Buddhism ..................................................................... 95
Gratitude as a Grand Root of Wellness for Self and Society ....................... 96
   Understanding Gratitude in Buddhism ............................................................ 96
   Gratitude Expressions in Thai College Women ................................................. 98
Common Thai Social Values .................................................................................. 101
   Thai women are the elephant’s hind legs ......................................................... 101
   Negative emotion concealment ......................................................................... 105
   Seniority-oriented system ................................................................................ 106
   Health concern greeting ................................................................................... 109
The Ongoing Surrounding Influences ................................................................. 109
   Media, Fashions, and Western Style Influences .............................................. 109
   The Influence of Education ............................................................................. 111
   Influences from Significant Others ............................................................... 111
Conclusion .............................................................................................................. 115

CHAPTER 7 SENSE OF SELF AND IDENTITY FORMATION
The Sense of Mindful Self ..................................................................................... 117
   The Cultural self ............................................................................................... 118
   The Authentic Self ............................................................................................ 121
   The Connected Self ........................................................................................ 124
   The Sensible Self .............................................................................................. 127
   The Autonomous Self ..................................................................................... 128
   The Competent Self ......................................................................................... 130
Developing the Mindful Self ................................................................................ 132
The Paths to Knowing Self .................................................................................. 136
Encounter with Death Issue Is a Path to Knowing Self .......... 136
Interpersonal Relations Are a Path to Knowing Self .......... 137
Experiential Learning and Exploration Is a Path to Knowing Self .................................................. 140
Sense of Self in a Non-Attachment Stage as a Healthy Sense of Self in the Thai Context ................................................................. 141
Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................... 145

**CHAPTER 8 HEALTH-RELATED BEHAVIOURS AND WELLNESS ENACTMENT**

Health Motivation .......................................................................................................................... 147

- The Gratitude Motive for Health Promotion ................................................................. 147
- The Positive Motivation of Getting Better Health ...................................................... 148
- The Negative Motivation of Avoiding Disease .......................................................... 149
- The Motivation of Attractiveness for Intimacy .......................................................... 149

Approaching Graduation Time Triggers

- Self-Awareness and Changes .................................................................................. 150

*Penn Baeb Yhang: To Be A Role Model* ........................................................................ 150

Health-Comprehension ............................................................................................................. 152

- Meaning Given to Health ......................................................................................... 152
- Health and Coherent Life Goals ............................................................................... 154
- Health Manageability ................................................................................................. 158

Active Cognitive Monitoring to Maintain Health ......................................................... 158

Health Competency ................................................................................................................. 160

- Belief in Self Capacity .................................................................................................. 160
- Basic Personal Care ..................................................................................................... 161
- Searching for Health Information ............................................................................. 161
- Routine Exercise Creates a Cycle of Well-being .................................................... 162
- Food and Energy Concerns ....................................................................................... 165
- Interpersonal Relations Maintenance ....................................................................... 168
- Spiritual Growth in Thai Ways .................................................................................. 169

Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................... 173
CHAPTER 9 MODEL CONCEPTUALISATION; IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The Model of the Mindful Self ................................................................. 177
Interpretation of the Findings .............................................................. 178
To Promote ‘Healthy Reasons’ and ‘Healthy Values’ ........................... 181
Morality in Society as the Global Culture ........................................ 185
Unintended Impacts of the Research .................................................. 187
Wellness Implications ......................................................................... 188
Implications for Nursing ..................................................................... 191
Limitations of the Study ...................................................................... 194
Recommendations for Future Research .............................................. 195
Concluding Statement ......................................................................... 197

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Reliability of the three instruments ................................. 198
Appendix 2 – Major programme of study of the participants
in Study A .............................................................................................. 199
Appendix 3 – Histograms presenting normal distribution
of the variables in Study A ................................................................. 200
Appendix 4 – Scattered plot of the variables in Study A ...................... 206
Appendix 5 – List of the participants for in-depth interviews
in Study B ................................................................................................ 209
Appendix 6 – Information sheet for Study A and Study B .................... 210
Appendix 7 – Consent forms .................................................................. 214
Appendix 8 – The Health-Promoting Lifestyle Profile II (HLP II) ........ 215
Appendix 9 – The Sense of Coherence Questionnaire (SOC) ............... 217
Appendix 10 – The Extended Objective Measure of Ego
Identity Status (EOM-EIS) ................................................................. 220

REFERENCES ......................................................................................... 225
# LIST OF FIGURES

1.1 Map of Thailand .................................................................................................................. 10
2.1 Theoretical Framework of Factors Impacting on HPLBs .................................................... 34
3.1 Diagram of Sequential Mixed Method Design .................................................................... 41
4.1 The Prediction Diagram for Variables in Study A ............................................................. 53
5.1 Questions Used to Assist the Process of Making Sense of the Data .................. 74
5.2 The Initial Mind Map for Making Sense of the Data ......................................................... 74
5.3 The Ongoing Activities to Condense Codes into Themes and Split them into Sub-themes .......................................................................................................................... 78
5.4 Questions Guiding Data Analysis and Interpretation ......................................................... 80
5.5 Reflective Journals on the Sense of Gratitude Towards Parents ........................................ 80
6.1 Summary of the Context and Surrounding Influences that Impact on Sense of Self and Health-Related Behaviours in Thai Society .................................................. 85
7.1 Summary of the Aspects Related to the Sense of Mindful Self and the Paths of Knowing Self .................................................................................................................................. 118
7.2 Three Levels of Mindful Motivation .................................................................................... 119
7.3 Summary of Sense of Self and The Paths of Knowing Self Derived from a Thai Context ................................................................................................................................. 136
8.1 Summary of Factors Influencing Health-Related Behaviours and Wellness Enactment ................................................................................................................................. 146
9.1 The Model of the Mindful Self in a Thai Context ................................................................. 176
### LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>The range of scores, mean scores and standard deviations for HPLP II and its subscales, sense of coherence, and total scores of each identity status, and ideological and interpersonal identity domains</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>The Spearman’s rho correlation coefficients for HPLP II, SOC, and the four types of identity</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>The Spearman’s rho correlation coefficients for the eight dimensions of ideological identity and interpersonal identity and HPLP II</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Hierarchical regression analysis predicting health-promoting lifestyle behaviours with sense of coherence, identity achievement, identity moratorium, and identity foreclosure</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Hierarchical regression analysis predicting health-promoting lifestyle behaviours with sense of coherence and ideological and interpersonal identity achievement</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Standard multiple regression analysis predicting sense of coherence with the six dimensions of HPLBs</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Standard multiple regression analysis predicting identity achievement with the six dimensions of HPLBs</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Open coding</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Synopsis comparison</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Generating the initial codes</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>The Mindful Self: Themes, Sub-themes, and Components</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>