



Becoming Buddhist: Experiences of Socialization and Self-Transformation in Two Australian Buddhist Centres (Bloomsbury Advances in Religious Studies)

Glenys Eddy

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What does it mean to be a Western Buddhist? For the predominantly Anglo-Australian affiliates of two Western Buddhist centres in Australia, the author proposes an answer to this question, and finds support for it from interviews and her own participant-observation experience. Practitioners' prior experiences of experimentation with spiritual groups and practices, and their experiences of participation, practice and self-transformation, are examined with respect to their roles in practitioners' appropriation of the Buddhist worldview, and their subsequent commitment to the path to enlightenment. Religious commitment is experienced as a decision-point, itself the effect of the individual's experimental immersion in the Centre's activities. During this time the claims of the Buddhist worldview are tested against personal experience and convictions.

Using rich ethnographic data and Lofland and Skonovd's experimental conversion motif as a model for theorizing the stages of involvement leading to commitment, the author demonstrates that this study has a wider application to our understanding of the role of alternative religions in western contexts.

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