

ABSTRACT

American Buddhism: A Sociological Perspective

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This dissertation examines the relationship between Buddhism and the sociology of religion, by examining the ways in which the study of American Buddhism can inform the theories of the sociology of religion, as well as applying the techniques and methodologies of sociology to this particular topic. Chapter 1 describes the difficulties associated with empirically studying American Buddhism, reviews current surveys on the subject, and suggests future avenues of research.

Chapter 2 explores a central debate within the study of American Buddhism, which is how best to distinguish the distinctive forms the religion takes. Employing techniques similar to those used by Steensland et al. (2000) to distinguish among forms of American religions, this paper assesses the utility of three of the primary typologies. Findings indicate that school of Buddhism and cultural vs. convert status are important separations within American Buddhism, in regards to spiritual beliefs and behaviors, views on morality, and trust of others.

Chapter 3 examines the differences in political views among immigrants who maintain a religion that is foreign to their new residence and converts to the religion in

the new country. Findings indicate that converts are generally more liberal than cultural Buddhists, but not on all political issues.

Chapter 4 looks at the ways in which globalization and modernization have led to a number of changes in Buddhism. This study tests the hypothesis that religious doctrinal differences are relative and the borders between religious organizations are malleable. This study examines the use of websites by American Buddhists, both to determine the networks they are part of and what content they use. Consequences for studying Buddhism and future avenues of research involving the internet are discussed.

Chapter 5 examines the effects of congregational diversity on growth. Using the United States Congregational Life Surveys (USCLS), findings indicate that neither homogeneity nor heterogeneity is related to growth in religious organizations. To the contrary, among 576 statistical models, only 8 show significant associations, implying that neither shared beliefs nor shared behaviors are associated with the size or changing size of a congregation.

American Buddhism: A Sociological Perspective

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CHAPTER ONE

Review of Surveys on American Buddhism

Introduction

Buddhism is one of the fastest growing religions in the United States.¹ In addition, Buddhists in America represent both a higher proportion and a larger absolute number than Buddhists in any other Western country (Baumann 1997). Even so, relatively little statistical information is available about Buddhist organizations or individuals. The goal of this review is to provide a summary of surveys that relate to American Buddhism, describe the difficulties in studying this religion, and suggest future avenues of research.

There are several ways that the study of American Buddhism could benefit the sociology of religion in general. The sociology of religion in the United States has primarily been focused on Christianity and new religious movements. A focus on Christianity is a certainty since it accounts for over three-quarters of the American population. New religious movements became the focus of numerous studies in the 1960's. This was partly due to their increasing numbers as well as their distinct differences with the broader culture. In addition, these studies provided a method of examining religious movements as they grew, rather than after they were fully formed.

¹ According to the American Religious Identification Survey (Kosmin et al. 2001) and the National Survey of Religious Identification (Kosmin and Lachman 1993), between 1990 and 2001, the number of Buddhists in the United States increased from 401,000 adults to 1,082,000. This is a change of 170% and is a higher rate of growth than any other religion with at least 100,000 members experienced, other than Hinduism.

The study of American Buddhism can build on each of these fields of research while contributing something new. Doctrinally, Buddhism is quite different from Christianity because it lacks an omnipotent God. This is a central assumption of many theories within the sociology of religion and needs to be adjusted to consider Eastern religions if the theories are truly meant to be universal (Sharot 2002). Buddhism is similar to Christianity, however, in the sense that it is an established religion with a long history and a presence in much of the world.

Buddhism in the United States also shares many characteristics of new religious movements in the United States. It is new to most people, has deviant beliefs and practices compared to Christianity, and has relatively few adherents. Some of the same factors that increase the success of new religious movements such as a lack of conventional religion also promote the growth of Buddhism (Smith 2006). The primary difference between Buddhism and any new religious movement is that Buddhism has proven it can succeed and prosper. While any of these new religions might, and most likely will, fail to grow, Buddhism has not only grown and survived for over two thousand years, but Buddhist organizations have succeeded in moving to new cultures and thriving. Thus, a major benefit of studying Buddhism in the United States is that it provides a case of a new religion which has already proven that it can succeed. At the same time, it is a non-monotheistic, non-western religion which can help to test current theories about the sociology of religion in a new context.

Empirical Difficulties

Three features of American Buddhism make it difficult to study in conventional nationally representative studies. These are rarity, language, and syncretism. The most clear-cut problem is that there are too few practitioners to achieve sufficient numbers for statistical analysis on most surveys. Even though the number of Buddhists in America more than doubled between 1990 and 2001, it still only represents about 0.5% of the adult population (Kosmin et al. 2001). This means that on nationally representative surveys which sample 1,000 respondents, only 5 Buddhists will be included. This is far below the number needed for statistically meaningful analyses. Indeed, the 2005 wave and the 2007 wave of the Baylor Religion Survey each only include 11 Buddhists, while the 2006 General Social Survey includes 31 American Buddhists.

One obvious way around this difficulty is to sample much larger numbers of people. This is precisely what was done with the 1990 National Survey of Religious Identification and 2001 American Religious Identification Survey. In the 2001 wave of the survey over 50,000 Americans were sampled, yielding over 200 Buddhists. Other than sociodemographics, however, very few questions were asked of respondents, limiting the ability to discover more than the basic characteristics of Buddhists. Another large survey that does provide more questions, and in turn more variables of interest, is the 2000 Social Capital Benchmark Survey. In total, there are 231 Buddhists in this survey. In fact, Wuthnow and Hackett (2003) used this dataset in their analysis of the integration of adherents of non-Western religions in the United States. The difficulty with this survey is that it is not nationally representative. 3,003 of the

respondents were nationally representative, while the remaining 26,230 were randomly selected from 41 predetermined communities (Putnam 2001).

For similar reasons, surveys of religious organizations in the United States tend to include very few Buddhist organizations. For example, the National Congregations Study (NCS) which surveyed 1,236 religious organizations in the United States included no Buddhist organizations (Chaves 1998). Even the 2000 Religious Congregations and Membership Study (Jones et al. 2002) which attempts to provide a census of religion in the United States estimated that there were 1,656 Buddhist organizations in the United States, but gives no sense of how many adherents there are. An additional difficulty when dealing with Buddhist organizations is that unlike most Christian denominations there are very few national, umbrella organizations. This means there is no set of organizations that can provide mailing lists or membership counts for all American Buddhists.

A second difficulty for studying American Buddhism is the language barrier. The majority of Buddhists in the United States are Asian and many are immigrants (Baumann 1997). The fact that most surveys in this country are conducted in English and occasionally Spanish could prevent many Buddhists from participating. Some evidence for this exists in the few Buddhists that are included in national surveys. For example, among the 11 Buddhists that were part of the first wave of the Baylor Religion Survey (2005), none were Asian. In addition, none of their parents were reported as being Buddhist, suggesting that all eleven were converts to the religion.² The 2006 GSS appears to have a more representative number of cultural Buddhists with 16 of the 31

² The religion of parents question did not allow respondents to report Buddhist directly, but rather an “other” category was provided that none of the aforementioned Buddhists selected.

Buddhists reporting to be Asian and 11 of those 16 having been raised in Buddhism. One of the few exceptions on providing surveys in Asian languages is the New Immigrant Survey (NIS) which allowed respondents to choose the language in which their survey was conducted. The difficulty with this survey is that the sample only includes recent immigrants, meaning that comparisons with the broader American population or non-immigrant Buddhists are not possible.

The final hurdle in studying Buddhism in this country is the issue of syncretism and internalized religious pluralism. Unlike Judeo-Christian traditions that tend to emphasize exclusivity of affiliation, Buddhism has historically co-existed with other faiths and been part of an adherent's belief system, not necessarily the entirety of their worldview. This seems to be the case in the United States as well. Rochford (2003) found that people were able to simultaneously identify and affiliate with both Buddhism and Judeo-Christian traditions.³ According to Wuthnow and Cadge (2004) 12% of Americans have been influenced by Buddhist teachings, while the National Survey of Buddhist Adherents found that over 29% of American Buddhists report to affiliating with more than one religion. Nevertheless, all major surveys that include questions about religion in the United States require respondents to select a single tradition. As a consequence, only the most committed American Buddhists appear on such surveys, excluding others who might affiliate with other traditions or just dabble in Buddhism, or what Tweed (1999; 2002) has termed Night-Stand Buddhists. Again, the NIS is an exception, allowing respondents to report as many religions as they choose. While such a problem may seem minimal, McLellan (2008) suggests it is partly responsible for the

³ See Boorstein (1997) and Kamenetz (1994) for further cases of the combination of Buddhism and Judaism.

disparity between her estimate of 250,000 Buddhists living in Toronto and the census count of approximately 100,000.

Organizational Surveys of American Buddhism

Don Morreale has compiled two extensive directories of American Buddhism. The first, *Buddhist America* (1988) was one of the original compilations of addresses and information about Buddhism in North America. It included information about over 500 Buddhist places of worship that provided lineage, leader, affiliation, year of establishment, facilities, retreats, and who could attend services.

The Complete Guide to Buddhist America (Morreale) is one of the most extensive listings of Buddhist organizations in the United States and Canada. In total, there are 1,062 organizations listed along with a brief description of each. In addition, Morreale conducted a brief survey of the organizations in question. This included two questions: when the center was established and how many people participated in activities at the organization. In addition, the affiliation of the organizations is available, allowing some comparisons across schools of practice. While there is information about a large number of Buddhist organizations it is very limited in the number of variables it provides. Neither of Morreale's directories indicates what the sampling frame is, making it difficult to determine which groups are included and which are excluded.

The Buddhist Directory (Lorie and Foakes 1997) makes a similar attempt to list the majority of Buddhist centers in the United States and Canada, along with basic information about each one. There are several hundred organizations listed in this directory with the amount of information varying dramatically. Some descriptions

include the founder, teachers, residents, festivals, facilities, accommodations, food, booking information, fees, expected behavior and directions. Others give only the address and phone number.

The National Survey of Buddhist Organizations (NSBO) was conducted in the spring of 2005 by Buster Smith with funding from the Center for Religious Inquiry Across the Disciplines. The NSBO was a mail survey that worked from a directory of religious organizations in the United States compiled by Gordon Melton (1994) which contained 1,592 Buddhist places of worship. The survey was two pages long and asked about the membership, services, and outreach programs of the group.⁴ The survey design involved sending each organization the questionnaire twice as well as a reminder postcard, which resulted in a 23% response rate. These 231 completed surveys by Buddhist organizations represent one of the largest surveys of Buddhist organizations in the United States. One shortcoming of this survey is that like many of the surveys of individual Buddhist Americans, it was only conducted in English and therefore may underrepresent immigrant respondents. One advantage is that it did allow organizations to be classified as practicing multiple types of Buddhism with 14% of the centers having this characteristic. The finding that American Buddhism houses multiple traditions in the same organization was the inspiration for Chapter 5. For further findings and methodology from the NSBO see Smith (2007).

Surveys of Individuals

More in-depth surveys of practicing Buddhists have tended to look at only one type of American Buddhism. For example, Phillip E. Hammond conducted the SGI-

⁴ A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

USA Membership Survey in 1997. This survey included over 300 questions, many from the General Social Survey. In total, there were 401 respondents (Hammond and Machacek 1999). While this allows for comparison with Americans in general, the sample is composed exclusively of subscribers to Soka Gakkai International (SGI) magazines. SGI is a relatively new form of Buddhism that is distinctive from many other schools and therefore likely not representative of American Buddhism as a whole.

James William Coleman conducted surveys of adherents at seven American Buddhist centers between 1992 and 1997 (Coleman 1999, 2001). Surveys were given to religious leaders who subsequently administered them to members. To start, Coleman selected seven Buddhist groups that were representative of American Buddhism. In total, two Zen, two Vipassana, two Vajrayana, and one eclectic organization were selected. This resulted in 359 completed surveys. The survey included 44 questions covering issues of demographics, religious belief and behavior, and the source of involvement in Buddhism.

The National Immigrant Survey (NIS) is a panel survey that began in 2003 of new legal immigrants to the United States. Because an estimated 75% of American Buddhists are of Asian descent, this type of survey should include a higher proportion of Buddhists than a general survey (Baumann 1997). In fact, the NIS does include 319 respondents who identify as Buddhist. While the NIS is representative of new immigrants to the United States, it is not representative of Americans in general, and therefore cannot be compared to Buddhist converts. In addition, while there are several questions about religion including history, attendance, and characteristics of the place of worship, none specifically pertain to Buddhism.

The National Survey of Buddhist Adherents (NSBA) was conducted in 2006 as a follow-up survey to the NSBO which surveyed individual American Buddhists rather than the organizations. The NSBA was funded by the Institute for Studies of Religion. Each respondent from the NSBO who had agreed to assist with an additional survey and had provided sufficient information was contacted about administering surveys to his or her members. In total, 20 Buddhist organizations agreed to give members the survey, with all eventually returning at least one survey. This resulted in 182 American Buddhist respondents, one of the largest samples of its kind. The survey used a 12-page abridged version of the 2005 Baylor Religion Survey (BRS) (Bader et al. 2007) as its template.⁵ This allows all of the findings to be compared with the general American population. Questions include demographics, politics, morality, and numerous religious issues. Again, language is a shortcoming of this survey since it was only conducted in English. Even so, 8% of the respondents were not citizens of the United States and 40% were Asian. This is far higher than the national average found by the 2005 BRS of 1% and 4% respectively. As previously noted, this survey allowed respondents to select multiple religious affiliations, as well as multiple affiliations within Buddhism (such as Zen and Pure Land). The NSBA mimicked many of the techniques used by Coleman in his survey of American Buddhists. The primary difference is that while Coleman consciously chose seven representative Buddhist centers, the NSBA relied on 20 Buddhist organizations that had already completed an organizational survey. Chapters

⁵ A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix B.

Table 1
Summary of Recent Surveys with Data on Buddhism in the United States

| Survey | Year | Unit of Analysis | # of Cases | Method | # of Variables | # of Religion Variables | Population | Source |
|---|-----------|------------------|---------------|---------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Buddhist America</i> | 1988 | Organizations | 500+ | Directory | N/A | N/A | Buddhist Centers in Canada and USA | Morreale (1988) |
| <i>The Complete Guide to Buddhist America</i> | 1997 | Organizations | 1,062 | Directory and mail survey | 2 | 0 | Buddhist Centers in Canada and USA | Morreale (1998) |
| NSBO | 2005 | Organizations | 231 | Mail Survey | 79 | 25 | Buddhist Centers in USA | Smith (2007) |
| Coleman Survey | 1992-1997 | Individuals | 359 | Survey | 44 | 37 | Members of 7 Buddhist Organizations | Coleman (1999, 2001) |
| SGI-USA Membership Survey | 1997 | Individuals | 401 | Mail Survey | 336 | ~200 | SGI Magazine Subscribers | Hammond and Machececk (1999) |
| NIS | 2003 | Individuals | 319 Buddhists | Interviews | 1,000+ | 35 | New American Immigrants | NIS.Princeton.edu |
| NSBA | 2006 | Individuals | 182 | Mail Survey | 350+ | ~200 | Buddhist Adherents from NSBO | See Chapter 3 |

2 and 3 use this data to resolve ongoing issues within the study of American Buddhism, and to apply techniques from the sociology of religion to this new context.

Alternatives

One alternative method for examining American Buddhism has been to look at its indirect effects on people of other faiths. For example, Wuthnow and Cadge (2004) found that 12% of Americans claim to have had their religious beliefs influenced by Buddhism. Other than the Responses to Diversity Project which Wuthnow and Cadge used for their analysis, almost no surveys ask specifically about Buddhism. For example, in asking about trust of religious groups, neither the Baylor Religion Survey nor the American Mosaic Project includes Buddhists. Furthermore, this type of data still is exclusively indirect in that it says nothing at all about American Buddhists.

Recommendations

The difficulties associated with gathering quantitative data about Buddhism in the United States lead to three suggestions for future research. First, researches should consider combining data from multiple countries to create comparative analyses. Kashima (2008) did this type of analysis to compare Japanese-American Buddhists with a general survey of Japanese and one of Americans. This type of analysis has the benefit of potentially drawing on a vast number of surveys to compensate for the weaknesses of any particular one. In addition, this type of research would account for the fact that Buddhism is a global religion.

The second suggestion for studying American Buddhism is to look to new methods of gathering data. For example, Chapter 4 employs the internet and website

link analysis to study American Buddhism. Because Buddhists represent a small proportion of the overall population it is important to use techniques that seek out this particular subgroup.

Finally, the slowest, but simplest method is to pool data from a number of datasets. For example, both the Baylor Religion Survey and the General Social Survey repeat many of the same questions each year. By combining the Buddhists over the course of several waves it would be possible to run statistical tests on this pooled subsample. This does not overcome the lack of questions pertaining to Buddhism specifically, but does allow for comparisons with Americans in general. Whatever methods are developed to deal with the shortcomings of current data, such sociological work will benefit the study of American Buddhism in general. In the same way, sociological theories of religion will gain from considering American Buddhism in particular.

CHAPTER TWO

RELTRAD for American Buddhism

Introduction

American Buddhism is often thought of as a homogeneous religious group. While it may be relatively small, this group of over one million Americans¹ is composed of practitioners from a wide variety of backgrounds. Important differences exist regarding the particular form of Buddhism practiced, ethnicity, intensity of practice and the form their practice takes. Rather than make broad claims that belie the diversity of American Buddhism, it is vital to separate out these sub-groups.

Within the study of American Buddhism numerous typologies have been suggested. These divisions exist along a number of lines including level of commitment, ethnicity, reason for the transmission of the tradition to America, and Buddhist school of practice. While all of these typologies demonstrate significant points of division within American Buddhism, they typically include no empirical evidence that the proposed groups actually differ in any ways other than the particular typology. For example, there is little empirical proof that such groups behave or believe differently either on religious or secular matters.

There are two important reasons for finding an empirical method for comparing these typologies. First, some scholars have suggested that such typologies are

¹ In their American Religious Identification Survey, Kosmin et al. (2001) estimated there were just over one million Buddhists in the United States. Baumann (1997) estimates the number at between three and four million, with 800,000 being of Euro-American ancestry.

meaningless, in part because American Buddhism is becoming a unified homogenous religion (i.e. Coleman 2008). Second, many ethnographic and qualitative studies of American Buddhism are based on prominent typologies in order to select organizations and individuals for study. If particular typologies are not significant or the most appropriate it can lead to less useful work than might otherwise be possible.

This paper will follow the methodology of Steensland et al. (2000) in their use of RELTRAD to distinguish religious groups in America. This is not to say that religious traditions per se will be the proposed method of separating these groups (although it will be one attempted method), but rather that their system of testing the predictive power of several competing typologies will be employed. In particular, this analysis will examine three of the most well known typologies of American Buddhism. These will be referred to as religious school, cultural vs. convert, and level of commitment.

On a more ambitious front, this study attempts to meld the best elements that sociology and religious studies have to offer. While religious studies perspectives have done much to describe the history and status of American Buddhism, there have been few attempts to quantify any differences that may exist. Sociology, and its rational choice approach in particular has done an excellent job of empirically testing theories about religion (see Young 1997), but has largely ignored non-theistic and non-Western faiths (Sharot 2002). Even concepts as basic to the sociological study of Western religion such as conversion, have been rejected by some who study Buddhism (i.e. Brekke 2002). This study will attempt to bring the empirical techniques of the

sociology of religion to bear on the observations of religious study approaches to American Buddhism.

Literature Review

Before any attempt is made to systematize and test the methods of separating American Buddhists it is important to understand the debates that surround the issue. Most prominent scholars of American Buddhism have weighed in on how best to separate one group from another. In turn they have critiqued the alternative methods of categorizing. According to Paul Numrich:

There has been considerable critical debate among researchers of North American Buddhists about at least one issue – namely, constructing a satisfactory typology of Buddhist identities (2008:3).

One of the most basic typologies is to distinguish between Asian American Buddhists and American Buddhists of European descent (Prebish 1993). This method is used quite frequently (i.e. Tweed 2000) and sometimes even implicitly (i.e. Spuler 2002). The weakness is that it tends to gloss over the details that are really of interest. The true distinction in this case is a matter of whether the individual Buddhist was born into the religion or consciously chose it later in life. While it may be true most of the time that a Caucasian practitioner of Buddhism was unlikely to have been raised in the tradition, this is by no means assured. Indeed, as the religion gains a longer history in the United States such possibilities will take place more and more often. Numerous terms have been used to identify the defining characteristics of these two groups including “heritage,” “ethnic,” “cradle,” “new,” and “convert” Buddhists (Nattier 2001, Tweed 2000, Coleman 2001). The current study will rely on the typology of Numrich (2000) between “cultural” Buddhists and “convert” Buddhists. This leads to the most

clear-cut theoretical distinction between types of American Buddhists. Thus, the dividing line is based upon whether a Buddhist was raised in the religion or chose it later in life. This allows the fifth generation Japanese-American who was raised Protestant but returned to his or her native faith to count as a convert.

While this dichotomy points out many substantive differences between the two practicing groups of American Buddhists it is not without its flaws. One key difference is that while both cultural and convert Buddhists in the United States may be an outgroup in regards to their religious affiliation, cultural Buddhists must also deal with issues of racial discrimination. Unlike converts, cultural Buddhists have a history of experiencing extreme racism in the United States and continue to be subject to such experiences (Fields 1998, Takaki 1989, Williams 2002).

Other distinctions exist within categories. For example, the generation of immigrants has been shown to cause distinct differences among cultural Buddhists (McLellan 2008). A striking case of this is among Japanese-Americans who have been in parts of the United States for over four generations (Nishimura 2008; Kashima 2008). Across these generations there are differences both in how adherents experience the religion and what they expect from it. More broadly many studies have pointed out particular characteristics of each type of immigrant group (i.e. Japanese-Americans see Nishimura 2008, Korean-Americans see Kim 2008, Taiwanese-Americans see Chen 2008). What these studies lack is any way of connecting these individual observations to create theories about broader groups, be it all immigrants, all Buddhists, or even all religious practitioners.

Debates over the cultural and convert typology have been extensive within the scholarly community. In addition, they have created divisive conflict among practicing American Buddhists.² In particular, there are issues about which types of American Buddhism gain attention both from scholars and mass media. Converts tend to get far more attention even though they are numerically the minority group.

Building upon these two types of American Buddhism, a trichotomous typology has become another option. This method further separates cultural Buddhists between those who have been present in the United States for a number of generations and those who are relatively new to the country, having arrived with the changing immigration laws after 1965.³ Even this more complex typology is not without detractors though. Seager (2002) suggests that such a separation both hides similarities between groups and differences within groups. For example, convert Buddhists were and are strongly influenced by the immigrant Buddhists who first brought the religion to the United States. Nattier's (1998) trichotomous typology distinguishes based on how the religion arrived in the United States. "Elite Buddhism" is the variety that was sought out by Americans and consists primarily of affluent Caucasian converts. "Evangelical Buddhism" was intentionally exported by those seeking to evangelize and is mostly represented by Soka Gakkai. "Ethnic Buddhism" is seen as a side product of immigrants who arrive in the country and bring their religion as a consequence.

An even more complex grouping system is provided by Machacek (2001) who creates four categories through a combination of the supply-side and demand-side

² For a summary of this debate see Numrich (2003).

³ For a review of this typology see Prebish (1999) and Gregory (2001).

approaches to American Buddhism. This results in the categories of “traditional,” “ethnic,” “convert,” and “Americanized” with the last one representing those American-born Buddhists of both cultural and convert backgrounds. A further possible separation of immigrants is based on their reason for migrating, what Swatos (2008) terms “relocation” and “dislocation.”

An alternative means of separating out American Buddhists is to look at the school of practice. In the same way that Christianity consists of Catholicism and Protestantism, Buddhism has a number of varieties which are distinct in regards to history, practice and doctrine. Within these major schools there are also numerous subschools, similar to Protestant denominations. The three major schools of Buddhism are Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana. Theravada is the oldest form of Buddhism and primarily is practiced in Southeast Asia. Mahayana consists of schools such as Zen and Pure Land and historically has been strongest in Japan, China and Korea. Vajrayana is Tibetan Buddhism and is epitomized for most Westerners by the Dalai Lama.⁴ Bankston and Hidalgo (2008:59) summarize the differences between Theravada and Mahayana by the primary actors in the goal for spiritual liberation. Within Theravada the responsibility rests with the monks who are engaged full-time in the spiritual welfare of the community, while Mahayana doctrine tends to emphasize the importance of the individual practitioner in achieving enlightenment. This can take many forms, such as meditation and chanting but no matter the means it leads to substantively different interactions between religious practitioners. While there are

⁴ For a more detailed description of the schools of Buddhism see Prebish (1975).

certainly differences within each religious school there is the perception that similarities are more prevalent.

If the Southeast Asians who comprise most of the Theravada Buddhists in North America have varied national backgrounds, they also share a great deal in common (Bankston and Hidalgo 2008:65).

Such distinctions based on school of religious practice are common within the sociology of religion when studying Christianity, but have been less frequently applied to the Buddhist context.

Finally, a less well-defined typology is to note the level of involvement people have in the religion. This is epitomized by the concept of “night-stand Buddhists” (Tweed 1999, 2002), those people who might consider themselves Buddhists but do not belong to an organization and whose practice is limited. As Wuthnow and Cadge (2004) have shown, over 10% of Americans think Buddhism has influenced their spirituality. Even if these individuals are included as American Buddhists, they are clearly substantively different from practitioners who visit a religious organization weekly, meditate daily, and read sacred Buddhist texts. While the broad strokes of this separation have been mentioned in the literature, little has been said concerning what difference this level of involvement makes. This is certainly in part due to the fact that practice is more of a continuum compared to a clear-cut distinction, such as convert status. Rather than being a dichotomous variable like cultural and convert status, it can easily have dozens of categories. Even so, it is worth testing whether Buddhists who practice more often, either publicly or privately, are substantively different than those who do not, because religious behavior in general is known to be a strong predictor of other behaviors.

Many studies within the sociology of religion have demonstrated the robust connection between the frequency of religious practice and a variety of attitudes. In the Christian context, church attendance has been shown to be associated with effects as diverse as increased mammogram use (Benamins et al. 2006), political intolerance (Katnik 2002), and belief in the afterlife (Hynson 1975). The primary private religious behavior in the United States is prayer. Research shows rates of prayer are correlated with psychopathology (Bradshaw et al. 2008) and anxiety about death (Koenig 1988).

Beyond the already mentioned taxonomies of American Buddhism there are numerous other methods of classification. One that bears mentioning is the proposed combination of methods suggested by Gregory (2001). He suggests a combination of Nattier's (1998) separation of converts into "Elite" and "Evangelical" Buddhism, with a similar separation of "Asian American" and "Immigrant" Buddhism. "Asian American" would refer to those Buddhists who have been in the United States for several generations, most notably Japanese Buddhist Churches of America. "Immigrant" Buddhism on the other hand would include those groups that had immigrated to the United States after 1965, when immigration laws changed.

It is important to note that none of these typologies is meant to separate American Buddhism just for the sake of separation. Rather, each highlights areas of potentially substantive differences. For example, Seager (2002) suggests that the uses of Buddhism differ among the three types of "old-line Asian-American," "Euro-American," and "ethnic" Buddhism. Using a different typology Layman (1976) distinguishes based on the type of practice. Her three typologies include meditation,

evangelism, and church which are matched to particular types of Buddhism regardless of the characteristics of individual practitioners.

What is lacking from these debates is any empirical method of determining which typology is the most effective for predicting substantive distinctions. As a result, multiple alternatives continue to exist with no clear-cut optimal choice. This is not to imply that one method is correct and all others are wrong, but rather that there should be some yardstick to measure which dividing lines really make a difference in classifying American Buddhists.

A primary difficulty in working with any of these typologies is that the more nuanced and therefore accurate they are, the more difficult it is to distinguish which categories people fit into based on broad survey questions. For example, the method Nattier (1998) proposes requires knowledge not only of what school of Buddhism is practiced, but also how that particular variety came to this country. For example, a practitioner of Vipassana meditation may either be an “Elite” if it was imported, or an “Ethnic” if it was brought along by immigrants.

A general argument that has been raised against all of these typologies is that they overly simplify a complex situation (McLellan 2008:37). While it certainly is the case that such categories gloss over differences, this is precisely the goal. Only by ignoring certain distinctions is it possible to notice some important characteristics of any group, in this case American Buddhists. In addition, such a claim that broad typologies are useless only seems meaningful if some sort of test of such a claim has been performed. As the literature demonstrates no such testing has been performed. The first goal of this study is precisely to determine whether there is a statistical effect

of these typologies. At that point we can have some evidence for deciding whether the categories are indeed useful.

In order to perform empirical tests on the validity of these typologies, the analytical strategy of Steensland et al. (2000) will be used. To determine what separation of American religious groups was most meaningful, Steensland et al. (2000) performed statistical tests with each of the competing typologies as an independent variable and a variety of religious and secular issues as dependent variables. The primary measure of success was the r-square value of the resulting model, with higher explanatory value indicating a more statistically meaningful typology. Although the current study will not use the same dependent or independent variables, it is possible to perform similar tests among American Buddhists by examining the typologies of interest.

Data and Methods

This research will use data from the National Survey of American Buddhists (2006).⁵ The sample size of this survey was 182 which included Buddhists from 20 different Buddhist organizations in the United States.⁶ Each of these respondents completed an abridged version of the 2005 wave of the Baylor Religion Survey (Bader et al. 2007), that asked about religion, politics, trust, and demographic characteristics. While not a random sample, this data does include a wide variety of Buddhists in America from a number of different schools of faith, ethnicities, ages, and

⁵ For more information about this survey see Chapter 3.

⁶ Five of the respondents did not self-identify as Buddhist and are excluded from all subsequent analyses.

socioeconomic status. In addition, as previously noted, it is the only available data for answering this study's questions of interest. From this sample it will be possible to test each of the three primary typologies against a wide variety of dependent variables of interest, thereby determining which distinctions actually matter, and which are simply cosmetic.

As previously mentioned, the three typologies that will be used include religious school, cultural vs. convert, and level of commitment. While the meaning of each of these separations is fairly clear, it is necessary to operationalize each one using available variables. In regards to religious schools each respondent was asked to say which schools of Buddhism he or she belonged to, with the choice to select one or more. Each of three major schools (Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana) was included as well as 15 other varieties of Buddhism such as Pure Land and Soto Zen. In addition, respondents could write in other forms of Buddhism that they practiced. Clearly, many of the particular forms of Buddhism are subschools, such as Rinzai Zen, which is a form of Mahayana. This resembles the way that Christianity includes both Protestantism and Catholicism, but there are numerous Protestant denominations. While it would be worthwhile to examine the differences between members of each of the different possible types of Buddhism, and future studies should certainly attempt this, because of sample size limitations each of the respondents was categorized as either Theravada or Mahayana.⁷ This could either mean they chose the overall school or a subschool which was collapsed into the category. One important note is that 9 respondents identified as both Theravada and Mahayana. While this type of individual religious pluralism is very

⁷ In particular it would be beneficial to examine Soka Gakkai since it is different from either Theravada or Mahayana and is a unique form of Buddhism in many ways (Geekie 2008).

interesting, for the current purposes these respondents are excluded and only those with exclusive affiliation are included. In total 31 respondents identified as exclusively Theravada and 123 as Mahayana.

Table 2
Crosstabulation of Cultural/Convert Buddhist Typology (Total Percentages)

| Race of Respondent | Both Parents are Buddhist | One Parent is Buddhist | Neither Parent is Buddhist |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Respondent is Asian | 47 (27%) | 10 (6%) | 12 (7%) |
| Respondent is not Asian | 3 (2%) | 3 (2%) | 96 (56%) |

Bold coded as Buddhist Convert

Italics coded as Cultural Buddhist

The next typology is that of cultural Buddhists and converts to Buddhism. Since the survey did not explicitly ask when people began to practice their religion, a proxy measure is necessary. In this case, ethnicity and the religion of one's parents are used. Cultural Buddhists are respondents who reported both of their parents as being Buddhist and self-identified as Asian. This is important, because it has been found that even for some Asian-American immigrants Buddhism is a new religion (Chen 2008). Converts, on the other hand, are those respondents that reported neither of their parents as being Buddhist. Thus, an Asian respondent whose parents were not Buddhist would count as a convert, thereby allowing a fifth generation Japanese immigrant to return to their traditional religion without it being ascribed. Both of these categories require that all three questions be answered. Therefore, someone who reported the religion of only one parent is excluded as missing for the current typology. As table 2 shows, 16 of the respondents were excluded from this typology either because one parent was Buddhist and the other was not, or because the respondent was not Asian but both of the parents

were Buddhist. In total, 108 respondents were coded as converts while 47 were cultural.

Table 3
Frequency Distributions of Religious Behavior

| About how often do you pray or meditate outside of religious services... | Frequency (%) | How often do you attend religious services... | Frequency (%) |
|--|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| Never | 11 (6%) | Never | 1 (1%) |
| Only on Certain Occasions | 26 (15%) | Once or Twice a Year | 4 (2%) |
| Once a Week or Less | 18 (10%) | Several Times a Year | 6 (3%) |
| A Few Times a Week | 27 (15%) | Once a Month | 3 (2%) |
| <i>Once a Day</i> | <i>49 (27%)</i> | 2-3 Times a Month | 24 (14%) |
| <i>Several Times a Day</i> | <i>48 (27%)</i> | About Weekly | 31 (18%) |
| Total | 179 (100%) | <i>Weekly</i> | <i>53 (30%)</i> |
| | | <i>Several Times a Week</i> | <i>55 (31%)</i> |
| | | Total | 177 (100%) |

Italics coded as Highly Committed

The final typology is the level of commitment one feels to Buddhism. In this regard the current sample is biased since all respondents self-identify as Buddhist and belong to a Buddhist organization. The least committed, such as Tweed's "Night-Stand Buddhists" (2002), are therefore excluded from the current study. Even so there is significant variation in the frequency of religious activity by the respondents. Table 3 shows the frequency distributions for public and private religious behavior. Since different traditions have different standards for worship, these analyses use two possible criteria. If a respondent either attended religious services weekly or more often *OR* prayed or meditated once a day or more they were counted as highly committed. By contrast, less committed American Buddhists fit neither of these criteria. In total, 134 respondents qualified as highly committed while 47 were coded as less committed.

This is not to imply that these respondents are uncommitted, but rather that they practice their religion less often on these two measures of behavior.

Table 4
Bivariate Correlation Matrix of American Buddhist Typologies

| Typologies | Religious Commitment | Cultural vs. Convert | School of Buddhism |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Religious Commitment | 1.00 (n=181) | | |
| Cultural vs. Convert | -0.322** (n=155) | 1.00 (n=155) | |
| School of Buddhism | -0.276** (n=154) | 0.126 (n=141) | 1.00 (n=154) |

*P-value <0.05 **P-value <0.01

Before proceeding there are several important correlations among these typologies that need to be highlighted. Table 4 shows the bivariate correlations of all three typologies. While school of Buddhism and cultural vs. convert status are not significantly correlated, each of the other typologies shows a significant association. This is due to the fact that among those American Buddhists in the current survey, Theravada Buddhists are much more likely to practice or attend services frequently, and converts to Buddhism are also likely to fall into this highly committed category. None of the correlation coefficients is above .4 however, so we should not assume that subsequent models will show the same effect for each of the typology variables. In other words, while it may be the case that there are some associations, there is enough variety that these typologies are not measuring the same thing. For example, while Theravada Buddhists in the sample tend to meditate often, Mahayana Buddhists have much more variety in the frequency of religious practice. Thus, while Theravada

Buddhists are highly committed, not all highly committed American Buddhists are Theravada Buddhists.

In order to test the importance of each of these typologies a variety of outcomes are measured. There are eight different scales as dependent variables, with some measuring supernatural beliefs and the others secular beliefs. The goal of these questions is not to find out about these particular issues themselves, but rather which typology does the best job of predicting outcomes. The specific topics were chosen in order to test similar issues to those chosen by Steensland et al. (2000). Some topics however, were either unavailable or inappropriate. For instance, biblical literalism clearly does not have the same meaning for Buddhists as it does for Christians. In addition, religious attendance cannot be used as a dependent variable since it is part of one of the typologies.

The first of the eight scales is about abortion attitudes. This scale consists of five separate questions from the survey about the morality of abortion under different circumstances. These range from pregnancy caused by rape to simply not wanting the child. Possible responses range from “not wrong at all” (1) to “always wrong” (4), thus giving possible scale values from 5 to 20. This scale has a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.90, implying that items are highly associated. A sexual morality scale consists of three questions that ask about the appropriateness of premarital, extramarital, and homosexual sexual relations, again with four possible responses from “not wrong at all” (1) to “always wrong” (4). This results in a scale ranging from 3 to 12, with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.66. These two scales were selected because Steensland et al. (2000) tested these two issues in their analysis of RELTRAD.

The religious experience scale consists of four questions that ask whether the respondent ever felt that they “were filled with the spirit,” “were one with the universe,” “left their body for a period of time,” or “were in a state of religious ecstasy.” By counting the number of items the respondent reported a scale from zero to four is created with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.72. Religious experience was selected as a dependent variable because it crosses the boundaries of particular religious faiths, thereby making it applicable to both cultural Buddhists and converts prior to their conversion.

In regards to less conventional forms of religion, two scales of New Age and paranormal items were created. Because many converts to Buddhism see it as part of a more general set of New Age beliefs it is likely that there will be an association between these two variables. Even so, this would demonstrate at least one significant difference between cultural and convert American Buddhists. The first is a measure of seven items asking whether the respondent engaged in various activities including using a Ouija board, witnessing a UFO, using nontraditional medicine, consulting a horoscope, consulting a psychic, visiting a haunted house, or having a dream that later came true. Although these cover a broad range in regards to how conventional they are, they hold together well with an alpha of 0.72. Next, a scale of nine items was created of what types of web sites and books the respondent had consulted about issues including alternative medicine, spiritual development, fortune-tellers, UFOs, ghosts, mysterious animals, astrology, Nostradamus, and the New Age in general. This had a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.807.

To measure attitudes toward other religions, a scale based on five trust questions was constructed. Respondents were asked whether they trust atheists, Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, and Muslims, with four possible responses from trusting “not at all” (1) to “a lot” (4). A higher score means the respondent is more trusting of other religious groups. The alpha score of this scale is 0.94.

A general morality scale was created from five questions asking whether certain activities are right or wrong. These include, consuming alcohol, viewing pornography, using marijuana, physician assisted suicide, and embryonic stem cell research. Each one had four possible responses from “not wrong at all” (1) to “always wrong” (4). The overall scale is thus a measure ranging from five to twenty, with lower scores associated with more permissive views. The alpha of this scale is 0.80.

The final scale concerns what activities are required to be a good person. These include social and economic justice, taking care of the sick and needy, teaching others your morals, converting others to your faith, serving in the military, and consuming fewer goods. There were four possible responses ranging from “not at all important” (1) to “very important” (4), and the scale had an overall alpha of 0.77.

Age, gender, marital status and education are used for control variables, to assure that it is the particular typology rather than shared demographics of the typology that make a difference. Education was coded as a dummy variable of either graduated from college or did not graduate from college. The graduated from college category includes either a college degree or postgraduate work or a postgraduate degree. Marital status is also a dummy variable which separates those who are currently married from

everyone else. Steensland et al. (2000) additionally controlled for race. Race was excluded from the current analyses because it is part of the cultural/convert typology.

Results

For all the proceeding models, gender, age, marital status and education are included as control variables but not displayed for the sake of simplicity. This means that each model shows the relationship of all these control variables with *one* of the typology variables in relation to the outcome of interest. In order to compare across models, both the standardized beta coefficient of the typology variable, and its statistical significance, along with the overall r-square value of the model are displayed.

Table 5
OLS Regression with Standardized Betas of Religious Experience, New Age Activities and Consultation

| Typologies | Religious Experiences | New Age Activities | New Age Consultation |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Highly Religiously Committed | 0.318** | 0.034 | 0.051 |
| R-Square | 0.220 | 0.126 | 0.189 |
| Cultural Buddhist ^a | -0.386** | -0.231** | -0.185* |
| R-Square | 0.265 | 0.169 | 0.192 |
| Mahayana Buddhist ^b | -0.187* | -0.047 | -0.092 |
| R-Square | 0.138 | 0.101 | 0.181 |

Model controls for gender, age, marital status and education

^a Reference group are converts to Buddhism

^b Reference group are Theravada Buddhists

*P-value <0.05 **P-value <0.01

Table 5 shows analyses with different supernatural beliefs and behaviors as the dependent variable and each of the three typologies as independent variables. For the

first set of models, the predicted outcome is how many of the four religious experiences the respondent reported. In this case all three typologies are statistically significant, suggesting that each is a useful way of distinguishing which American Buddhists are most likely to claim these types of experiences. As we would expect, the religious commitment variable model shows that Buddhists who either attend religious services frequently or practice prayer or meditation once a day or more, tend to have more religious experiences than less engaged Buddhists. In addition, converts to Buddhism tend to have more religious experiences than cultural Buddhists. Finally, Theravada Buddhists tend to have more of these experiences than Mahayana Buddhists. While all of these may be partly an issue of semantics in terms of what language converts and Theravada Buddhists use in describing their religiosity, it still displays a significant difference in the types of experiences claimed. Following Yamane's (2000) suggestions about how to study religious experiences, this analysis relies exclusively on the respondent's interpretation of the event. By comparing the r-square values we can see that the cultural vs. convert distinction is the most useful in predicting religious experience outcomes, with an r-square of 0.261. Next is religious commitment, with school of Buddhism being the least effective.

The next measure of supernatural issues is the number of New Age activities in which the respondent has participated. In these models neither commitment nor school makes a difference in the outcome. Again however, cultural Buddhists tend to have lower scores than converts to Buddhism. In fact, cultural Buddhists tend to have participated in almost one full New Age activity less on average. This is also evidenced

by a higher r-square value when using the cultural vs. convert typology rather than commitment or school.

In regards to reading and consulting New Age materials, the same pattern appears. Commitment and school of Buddhism are not significant, but being a cultural or convert Buddhist matters. In this case converts to Buddhism are more likely to have sought out information about one or more of these New Age issues than cultural Buddhists. Putting these first three models together we can see that only the convert typology matters for New Age spirituality, while religious commitment and school of Buddhism also make a difference in general religious experiences.

Table 6
OLS Regression with Standardized Betas of Good Person, Morality and Trust of Other Religions Scales

| Typologies | Good Person Scale | Morality Scale | Trust Other Religions |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Highly Religiously Committed | -0.010 | 0.199* | -0.136 |
| R-Square | 0.040 | 0.156 | 0.096 |
| Cultural Buddhist ^a | -0.103 | 0.126 | -0.229* |
| R-Square | 0.039 | 0.129 | 0.100 |
| Mahayana Buddhist ^b | 0.269** | -0.359** | 0.084 |
| R-Square | 0.114 | 0.230 | 0.067 |

Model controls for gender, age, marital status and education

^a Reference group are converts to Buddhism

^b Reference group are Theravada Buddhists

*P-value <0.05 **P-value <0.01

Next we have two general measures of views on morality. The first is the “good person” scale which asks whether such behaviors are necessary in order to be a good person. As Table 6 shows, neither religious commitment nor cultural vs. convert status

makes a difference in terms of which activities American Buddhists think are important, but being a Mahayana Buddhist is highly significant, singlehandedly doubling the r-square value. By looking at individual items it is possible to see that Mahayana Buddhists are more apt to think seeking economic and social justice and aiding the sick and needy are major components in being a “good person” in comparison to Theravada Buddhists.

The general morality scale looks at whether five contentious issues are viewed as right or wrong. In this case, religious commitment did make a difference, with those who are more religiously active being more likely to consider activities like alcohol, drug use and physician assisted suicide morally wrong. There was no difference between cultural American Buddhists and converts. Once more, Mahayana Buddhists were different than Theravada Buddhists. Theravada Buddhists tend to see more of these actions as wrong. Looking at individual items this difference held up for all issues except for marijuana where there was no difference. Based on r-square values, religious school was a better predictor than commitment.

To test attitudes toward other religions, trust of five different religious groups was used. Neither commitment nor school of practice was significant, but cultural vs. convert status did make a difference. At least in regards to the particular religions in question it appears that cultural American Buddhists are less likely to trust other religions than converts. As the r-square value indicates, even the cultural vs. convert typology does not provide all that much predictive power.

Finally, we will examine two particular moral issues that tend to be dividing lines both religiously and politically in the United States, abortion and sexual behavior.

The abortion scale shows that in regards to religious commitment and cultural vs. convert status American Buddhists are no different from each other. Again, school of practice is statistically significant. In this case, Mahayana Buddhists are more likely to think abortion is morally permissible than Theravada Buddhists.

Table 7
OLS Regression with Standardized Betas of Abortion and Sex Scales

| Typologies | Abortion Scale | Sex Scale |
|--------------------------------|----------------|-----------|
| Highly Religiously Committed | 0.145 | 0.085 |
| R-Square | 0.118 | 0.204 |
| Cultural Buddhist ^a | 0.073 | 0.198* |
| R-Square | 0.109 | 0.209 |
| Mahayana Buddhist ^b | -0.274** | -0.153 |
| R-Square | 0.112 | 0.209 |

Model controls for gender, age, marital status and education

^a Reference group are converts to Buddhism

^b Reference group are Theravada Buddhists

*P-value <0.05 **P-value <0.01

The final scale in Table 7 is of sexual morality. This time, religious commitment and school of Buddhism do not make a statistically significant difference, but cultural vs. convert status does. In particular, cultural Buddhists tend to think more of these behaviors are wrong, while converts are more willing to see them as acceptable. This fits with many of the other findings that indicate that cultural Buddhists tend to be more conservative in their attitudes toward morality.

Discussion

The analysis of the previous scales provides a means of understanding which of the typologies are most useful for understanding differences among American Buddhists. There appear to be particular types of issues that certain typologies explain better than others. In particular, religious commitment seems to be very erratic in regards to its explanatory power, only showing statistical significance for two of the nine dependent variables, and even then not doing as good of a job as alternative typologies. It is important to note that this lack of results may be largely an effect of the sample. By only having respondents who are associated with a Buddhist organization, this naturally excludes the most peripherally associated American Buddhists. Even so, this shows that among practicing Buddhists the frequency of religious behavior appears to make little difference for the measured outcome variables.

The other two typologies appear to be rather complementary. Convert and cultural status is an effective typology for explaining the presence of religious experiences, New Age activities and consultation, as well as sexual morality. School of Buddhism, on the other hand, explains religious experiences, what it takes to be a good person, general morality, and attitudes toward abortion. Put together, these two typologies help to explain all nine dependent variables, even though they only overlap on one, religious experiences. This suggests that both are important and meaningful typologies of American Buddhism, although they matter for different types of issues. Being a convert or cultural Buddhist matters when we look at New Age issues, which makes sense given that for converts to Buddhism, their religion is itself part of the New Age landscape. Meanwhile for cultural Buddhists, their religion is conventional, while

New Age beliefs may be deviant. This fits with Roof's (1993, 1999) concept of a "spiritual quest culture." The converts are "spiritual seekers" for whom Buddhism is just one of the avenues of exploration.

School of Buddhism, on the other hand, tends to matter for issues associated with morality and correct behavior. In fact, the differences line up with the Theravada Buddhists suggestion that they are a more orthodox version of the religion. This is evident in that they take more conservative stances on moral issues, particularly abortion.

Overall, it looks as if school of Buddhism and whether a person was born into the religion or chose it later in life are equally important cleavages within American Buddhism. Furthermore, the most useful method is probably to consider them in conjunction, rather than as competing choices. What this data is unable to accomplish, but would be very helpful for future research to examine, is whether these two differences interact in significant ways. In other words, does it mean something different to be a convert to Theravada than to Mahayana? Table 8 presents such a typology which may be useful for future research. This assumes the addition of other schools of Buddhism for which researchers have sufficient sample sizes.

Table 8
Proposed Typology of American Buddhism

| Cultural or Convert | Theravada | Mahayana |
|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Cultural Buddhist | Cultural Theravada | Cultural Mahayana |
| Convert to Buddhism | Convert Theravada | Cultural Mahayana |

Another highlight of this study is that it helps to shed light on what the substantive differences between these types of American Buddhists are. Interestingly, school of Buddhism appears to shape boundaries along the same lines as political parties in the United States. This is especially interesting since other research has shown that cultural and convert Buddhists are no different in regards to their political party identification, even though they do vary in regards to particular political issues (See Chapter 3). In this case it appears that the doctrine of Theravada tends to match up better with more conservative social views, while Mahayana is more liberal. The differences between cultural and convert Buddhists seems to have far less to do with differences of doctrine and more to do with the general status of the supernatural in the adherents' lives. Converts tend to be dabbling in more forms of religion, and therefore having more religious experiences and experimenting with other forms of spirituality compared to their cultural counterparts.

Conclusion

This study indicates that important differences exist between certain types of American Buddhists. In general converts to Buddhism are spiritual seekers who have dabbled in a variety of New Age materials and had many religious experiences. These converts are more trusting of other religious groups than their cultural counterparts and have more permissive views on sexuality. Mahayana Buddhists in the United States are more liberal than Theravada American Buddhists on almost all issues including general morality, abortion, and what it takes to be a good person. Among Buddhists who belong to a Buddhist organization those who attend or practice privately frequently are

no different from those who are less religiously active, except for the number of religious experiences they claim.

While this study is not definitive in determining which distinctions within American Buddhism are most substantively significant, overall it does shed light on the ways previous typologies are most meaningful. While the current dataset is insufficient for examining Gregory's (2001) four part taxonomy in detail, preliminary evidence suggests that it may be the most adept at handling all the significant categories. For example, his "Immigrant" and "Asian American" categories match up well with a combination of cultural Theravada Buddhists and cultural Mahayana Buddhists respectively. This is because much of the recent influx of immigrants from Asia have been from Southeast Asia, countries which are traditionally Theravada, while more well established Buddhist communities tend to be from China and Japan, Mahayana countries. On the other side of the typology, both "Elite" and "Evangelical" are assumed to be convert groups, however, due to the lack of Soka Gakkai respondents (those that would qualify as "Evangelical" Buddhists) it is not possible to see whether this distinction shows differences.

More generally, this study helps to show how the empirical techniques of sociology in general and the sociology of religion in particular can help to resolve debates that may be unanswerable through exclusively ethnographic or theoretical studies. In particular, the method of examining which variables separate American Buddhists allows us to see which differences actually have an effect on other beliefs and behaviors beyond those directly tied to the religion. It is not surprising that Mahayana Buddhists hold different doctrinal beliefs than Theravada Buddhists, but it is useful to

know that these differences extend into matters of religious experience and general views on moral behavior. At the same time this shows us which typologies are less useful, in this case separating Buddhists by the frequency of religious practice, at least within those who belong to a religious organization.

Indeed the study of American Buddhism has tended to employ few if any quantitative statistical techniques. While this is partly due to the predominance of religious studies scholars in the field, the emphasis on qualitative studies extends to social scientists in the field. For example, in the most recent collection of articles on the subject, *North American Buddhists in Social Context*, a publication of the Association for the Sociology of Religion edited by Paul Numrich (2008), only one of the nine chapters included quantitative methods.

Some scholars have argued that these typologies are pointless because they are changing so quickly. Indeed, forces such as intermarriage between cultural and convert Buddhists are creating new groups that never existed before (McLellan 2008:42; Bankston and Hidalgo 2008:61). Even so, this study sets an important baseline. Precisely by noting which typologies matter now, we can subsequently determine which ones lose importance over time.

This study has made the effort to move from proposed theoretical distinctions for understand American Buddhists into the realm of empirical assessment. In general, both the cultural/convert, and school of practice distinctions are important delineations for different issues. Taken together this suggests that American Buddhism is a dynamic and multi-faceted religious group, with a number of meaningful distinctions that can be analyzed. Not only are these differences significant in and of themselves, but they have

implications on the beliefs and behaviors of adherents on issues from paranormal experiences to attitudes toward abortion.

CHAPTER THREE

In Buddha We Trust

Introduction

Buddhism in the United States is often associated with open-mindedness and liberalism. This attitude may in part be due to its initial transmission via the Beatnik movement and later the hippie culture of the 1960's. Nowadays, the stereotype of Buddhists is that they are people with ultra-liberal views. While this may be accurate for many converts to Buddhism who have separated the practice of Buddhism from many of the original teachings, it overlooks a primary element of American Buddhism, the immigrant population.¹³ Immigrant Buddhists may in fact be very traditional in both their religious and political views. Their religious orthodoxy is demonstrated by virtue of the fact that these immigrants are maintaining their native religion, rather than converting to Christianity, the predominant religion of the United States. This is by no means a certainty, and in fact many Asian immigrants are Christian or become Christian (for Chinese Americans see Yang 1999, for Korean Americans see Ecklund 2006). In addition, many of the more traditional doctrines of Buddhism teach behavior that would be considered politically conservative in American culture, such as disapproving of alcohol, drugs, sexual misconduct, or taking life, which is sometimes seen as including abortion.

¹³ Indeed, Buddhist immigrants to the United States have consistently been underrepresented in both the media and scholarly works, as compared to American Buddhist converts (Numrich 1996).

The difference between Buddhist immigrants and American converts to the religion can be seen in the organizational rift that exists between the two groups in the United States.

The most prominent feature of American Buddhism for the last three or so decades has been the gulf between immigrants and converts, created by a range of deep cultural, linguistic, and social differences. A less obvious but extremely important dimension of this gulf is more strictly religious; here the contrast between tradition and innovation often appears in particularly high relief (Seager 1999:233).

This separation means that even in areas with high numbers of immigrants and converts there is little, if any, interaction (for the case of Chicago see Numrich 2000).

People who convert to Buddhism are not chosen randomly from the population. They have some propensity toward the exotic and new which is already evident in their religious choice. Indeed, it is possible for such converts to see their own journey as similar to that of the founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama, who presented radical new ideas to a largely Brahmin culture (Coleman 2008:186). While this certainly would not qualify as a “culture war” in the case of Buddhism, it does fit Hunter’s (1991) idea that progressive and orthodox groups can and do exist within the same religious family in the United States.

The current separation is distinct from the difference between traditionalist and modernist strains of Buddhism. Even among groups of immigrant Buddhists there are varieties that practice more modern forms of the religion. For example, those who follow Thich Nhat Hanh’s variety of Vietnamese Buddhism are considered modernists unlike Amida temple followers who are also Vietnamese, but would be considered a traditional form of the religion (McLellan 2008:25). In a broader sense this study will not separate between the Theravada, translated as “the Teachings of the Elders,” and

Mahayana, which is a more modernist school of the religion. While this may be an important separation, it is distinct from the current issue of maintaining the status quo and being more radical about issues related to religion and politics.

This research begins to tackle two of the issues that Cadge and Ecklund (2007) consider important for future research in the area of immigration and religion. First, it uses “survey data” to “examine how religion as an independent variable influences immigrants’ economic mobility and civic and *political participation*” (italics added, 372). Second, by looking at the difference between Buddhist immigrants and Buddhist converts it fulfills the goal of:

Additional analytic comparisons are needed to understand fully how immigrants develop and participate in religious organizations ... i.e. comparisons between immigrant and native-born people practicing the same religion (372).

On a broader scale it builds upon, but extends, the qualitative work that Cadge and Ecklund (2007) say has predominated the field, to include more rigorous statistical testing through the use of quantitative data.

Typology of American Buddhism

The subject of how to distinguish between the myriad types of Buddhism in America is by no means uncontroversial. Numerous typologies have been suggested including the use of two categories, three categories and more. The two category system separates European American Buddhists from Asian American Buddhists (Prebish 1993; Gregory 2001). Nattier (1998) suggests a more substantively meaningful typology with three categories. Instead of using ethnicity as the divider, Buddhists are separated by the way in which the religion came to the United States, either consciously imported, consciously exported, or a coincidence of immigration

(1998:189). This does not even include all the other religious actors who relate to Buddhism such as, “Buddhist sympathizers,” “night-stand Buddhists,” and “inquirers” (Tweed 2002: 29).

For the purposes of this study a very simple two category system will be used that only distinguishes between cultural Buddhists and convert Buddhists. Cultural Buddhists are understood as people who were born into a Buddhist family, either in the United States or abroad, and thus come from a culturally Buddhist tradition. Convert Buddhists, on the other hand, are people who are not Buddhist because it was an ascribed religion, but rather because it is a chosen religion. While this leaves many possible nuances unexplored, such as the fifth generation Japanese immigrants who return to the faith that their parents abandoned, or the Caucasian child who maintains the faith that his or her parents adopted during the 1960s, it seems to be a necessary compromise for the current study. Many scholars have noted the differences and similarities between these two broad groups, and the primary goal of this analysis is simply to build on such work by examining whether politics is another way that these two types of American Buddhists differ.

Relevant Characteristics of Buddhists

One meaningful way that adherents of the two types of American Buddhism differ is in their motivations for practicing the religion. Converts and cultural Buddhists tend to practice the religion for very different reasons.

Immigrant ethnic group members will often found a church or temple as a conscious expression of their cultural solidarity and of continuity with the homeland (Bankston and Hidalgo 2008:56).

This is clearly not the case for converts to the religion who are already living in their homeland and accept a new religion. Furthermore, many immigrants are motivated by the religious merit of karma, whereas many converts see it as technique of reaching mental clarity and psychological well-being (Baumann 2002, Cadge 2005, Kim 2008). In regards to orthodoxy, for many immigrants, religion is seen as a way of maintaining their culture and passing it on to children (Bankston and Zhou 1996). Indeed, many immigrants tend to become more religious when entering the United States as a way of preserving their ethnic traditions (Smith 1978, Warner 1998, 2000).

Qualitative, and a limited number of quantitative studies, have already demonstrated that converts to American Buddhism tend to be different from Americans in general. In particular, they tend to be more egalitarian, well-educated, and affluent, as well as being predominantly white (Wuthnow and Hackett 2003; Cabezon 1992; Gross 1993; Tsomo 1988).

Data and Methods

This study relies upon two surveys of American Buddhism that were conducted from 2005 to 2006. Both surveys were funded by the Institute for Religious Studies. The National Survey of Buddhist Organizations took place in 2005 and gathered information about 231 Buddhist Organization in the United States. The initial listing of centers came from Gordon Melton's *National Directory of Churches, Synagogues, and Other Houses of Worship* (1994). Each center was asked a variety of questions including the demographic characteristics of their members, the type of Buddhism they practiced, services that were offered and means of recruitment. For more information see Smith (2007). Each organization was also asked whether it would be willing to

participate in a follow-up study. Every center that provided a contact name and phone number was called during the Spring of 2006 and twenty organizations agreed to participate in a second survey.

This follow-up survey took place in 2006 and was intended to examine the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of individual Buddhists. As such, each respondent that agreed to participate was mailed thirty surveys and asked to distribute them to members of their organization and then return them in a postage paid envelope. The survey was modeled after the Baylor Religion Survey (Bader et al. 2007), but was abridged and slightly modified. The survey was shortened and a number of questions about God were removed to slightly reduce the monotheistic focus of the survey. In addition, because recent studies of Buddhism have shown that many Western adherents see themselves as belonging to multiple religions (Rochford 2003; Obadia 2002; Tweed 2002) respondents were allowed to select as many affiliations as applied. After this question, respondents were allowed to note the precise type of Buddhism that they affiliated with, again allowing multiple selections. Finally, several questions were modified to make them more applicable for Buddhist respondents, such as including Amida Buddha in a question about prayer, and including Sutras as a religious text that might be read.

The 20 centers that participated returned 182 completed surveys, with two organizations only returning one survey each and the maximum returned by any center being 22. The mean number of surveys returned was 9.1 and the median was 9. Table 9 shows descriptive statistics comparing the Buddhist organizations that responded to the first survey as compared to those that participated in the follow-up survey. Region

is one variable that can be compared to determine response bias. The region of the country where the organizations were located is similar for centers in the initial mailing list, those that completed the first survey, and those that participated in the follow-up survey. Median membership sizes were larger among follow-up survey respondents and mean sizes were smaller due to the fact that fewer large outlying groups participated. The most commonly selected types of Buddhism are listed, and there are two distinct changes between the survey groups. Mahayana Buddhism appears to be potentially underrepresented among the second survey, while Pure Land seems to be overrepresented. While no self-evident reason for such a bias is apparent, it should be kept in mind when viewing the following results.

To determine whether respondents fit the convert or cultural typology several variables were used. To qualify as a cultural Buddhist, both parents' religion had to be Buddhist and the respondent had to be Asian. Because respondents were allowed to select all racial categories that applied this does not mean that they necessarily exclusively identify as Asian. In addition, if any of these three questions were not answered the respondent was excluded from the following analyses. Converts were defined as respondents for whom neither parent was Buddhist. Thus, respondents who were Asian, but whose parents were not Buddhist were coded as converts. Finally, it is important to note that five respondents did not self-identify as Buddhist and were coded as missing in regards to convert or cultural status. In total, 108 respondents qualified as converts, while 47 were coded as cultural Buddhists, and 27 were coded as missing because of insufficient or ambiguous data.

In order to test whether differences in political views of Buddhists in America are due to cultural/convert status, or a side-effect of some other sociodemographic characteristic, a number of control variables are included. Descriptive statistics of these variables are included in Table 9. Gender was coded as either male or female, with a majority of converts being female and a slight majority of cultural respondents being male. The median and mean age was very similar within each group, and cultural Buddhists on average were about 10 years older than convert Buddhists in this sample. United States citizenship was included because it is important to many political behaviors such as voting. The vast majority of all respondents were US citizens, with only 3% of converts not being citizens, and 17% of cultural Buddhists not being citizens. Marriage was coded into a dummy variable for whether or not the respondent was currently married. More cultural Buddhists were married (68%) than converts (44%). Finally, education is included in the form of a dummy variable of whether the respondent has graduated from college. This is a combination of two possible responses, college graduate and postgraduate work or degree. Education is included because high socioeconomic status is consistently associated with higher levels of political participation (Nie, Powell and Prewitt 1969). Overall, this sample is a very educated group with a majority of both cultural and convert Buddhists having at least a college degree. Wuthnow and Hackett (2003) similarly found that both immigrant and convert Buddhists in the United States tend to have higher socioeconomic status than American Christians.

Table 9
*Mean Scores of Dependent Variables for
 Cultural (n=47) and Convert Buddhists (n=108)*

| Dependent Variables | Convert Buddhists ^a | Cultural Buddhists | Total | Americans in General (n=1721) |
|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|
| Political Party Affiliation (1=Strong Republican, 7=Strong Democrat) | 4.9** | 4.5 | 4.8 | 3.9 |
| Political Participation (9-point scale) | 4.2** | 2.0 | 3.6 | 3.4 |
| Wanted John Kerry to Win 2004 Presidential Election | 73%** | 42% | 64% | 40% |
| Attitude Toward Abortion (20-point scale) | 8.8 | 9.6 | 9.1 | 11.9 |
| Marriage and Family Issues (24-point scale) | 8.4** | 11.6 | 9.3 | 13.6 |
| Attitude Toward Iraq War (15-point scale) | 4.7** | 7.6 | 5.6 | 8.5 |
| Political Tolerance (15-point scale) | 13.0** | 11.5 | 12.5 | 10.2 |

Data from NSBA and 2005 BRS

^aDifference of means tests between convert Buddhist and cultural Buddhist values

*P-value<0.05

**P-value<0.01

It is possible to examine several different dimensions of politics with the current data. First, the survey examined affiliation by asking “How would you describe yourself politically?” and providing 7 possible responses: “Strong Republican,” “Moderate Republican,” “Leaning Republican,” “Independent,” “Leaning Democrat,” “Moderate Democrat,” and “Strong Democrat.” In addition, respondents were asked which presidential candidate they wanted to win in the 2004 election. For this analysis the categories have been collapsed into two categories: John Kerry and any other candidate. This is because of those respondents who expressed a preference, a

significant majority (64%) wanted Kerry to win. For a measure of political participation, an index was made from 9 yes or no questions about political behavior leading up to the 2004 election. These behaviors included activities like watching a debate, participating in a protest, or giving money to a candidate.¹⁴ Thus, the lowest possible score of zero represented a person who engaged in none of these activities, while the highest score of 9 meant engaging in every activity. The Cronbach's alpha of this scale is 0.76.

To examine attitudes toward specific political issues a set of scales were created for abortion attitudes, marriage and family issues, political tolerance, and the war in Iraq. For abortion, five different situations were presented and four possible response categories were given ranging from "not wrong at all" (1) to "always wrong" (4). This created a scale from 5 to 20 with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89. The marriage and family scale included 6 questions about whether divorce, pre-marital cohabitation, pre-marital pregnancy, adoption by a gay couple, interracial adoption, and gay marriage were right or wrong, with four possible responses. For this scale the Cronbach's alpha was 0.88, with higher scores indicating more conservative views. The political tolerance scale summed three questions that asked whether controversial groups should be allowed teach in high school including atheists, Muslims, and homosexuals. The alpha for this scale was 0.89.¹⁵ The scale about the Iraq war included three questions; whether the US was justified in entering Iraq, whether Saddam Hussein was involved in the 9/11 attacks, and whether the US must establish democracy in the Middle East. The five

¹⁴ For a complete list of questions see the 2005 Baylor Religion Survey questions 43a through 43i.

¹⁵ The survey also asked about whether a racist should be allowed to teach but including this variable lowered the scale's alpha level to 0.67.

response choices ranged from “strongly agree” (5) to “strongly disagree” (1) and the Cronbach’s alpha was 0.82. For all analyses other than determining whether the respondent wanted John Kerry to win an ordinary least squares regression was used. For the presidential preference question a binary logistic regression was employed.

Initial differences between convert and cultural Buddhists in regards to the dependent variables of interest are shown in Table 9. For all the variables cultural Buddhists have more conservative views than converts. This difference is statistically significant for all variables other than attitudes toward abortion, which shows no significant difference. Cultural Buddhists also tend to participate in fewer political activities on average.

By comparing these findings to the Baylor Religion Survey which asked the same questions several months earlier it is possible to see how each group of Buddhists contrast with Americans in general. While cultural Buddhists are more conservative than their convert counterparts it appears that both groups are more liberal than the average American. In regards to political participation cultural Buddhists seem to be less active than Americans in general, while convert Buddhists are actually more active on average.

Results

Table 10 shows the descriptive statistics of the Buddhist organizations. This includes the available information about all the Buddhist organizations in Melton’s directory, the ones that responded to the initial survey, and those which participated in the second survey. For centers that did not respond to either survey only geographic region is known. This is shown to demonstrate that generally, responding organizations

are representative of the entire population. Most Buddhist organizations tend to be located in the West coast of the United States, with a fairly equal distribution across other parts of the country.

Table 10
Descriptive Statistics of Buddhist Organizations in the United States

| Descriptive Statistics | All Organizations in Melton's <i>Directory</i> | Original Responding Organizations | Follow-up Responding Organizations |
|------------------------|--|---|--|
| Region | | | |
| West | 62.6% (997) | 67.4% (155) | 60.0% (12) |
| Northeast | 14.4% (230) | 13.9% (32) | 20.0% (4) |
| South | 13.0% (207) | 10.4% (24) | 10.0% (2) |
| Midwest | 10.0% (159) | 8.3% (19) | 10.0% (2) |
| Active Adult Members | | | |
| Median | | 132.5 | 200 |
| Mean | | 513 | 261 |
| Standard Deviation | | 1,702 | 225 |
| Minimum | | 0 | 30 |
| Maximum | | 16,941 | 900 |
| Seeking New Members | | 77.6% (166) | 83.3% (15) |
| Mahayana | | 26.4% (61) | 10.0% (2) |
| Theravada | | 17.3% (40) | 20.0% (4) |
| Vajrayana | | 13.9% (32) | 10.0% (2) |
| Pure Land | | 29.9% (69) | 50.0% (10) |
| Soto Zen | | 13.0% (30) | 15.0% (3) |
| Total | 1,593 | 231 | 20 |

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% because respondents were allowed to choose all categories that applied.

The other information comes from the initial survey to help determine whether organizations that participated in the follow up survey are similar to those that only completed the initial survey. In regards to membership size, the follow-up responding organizations have a larger median and lower mean number of members which is

accounted for by the absence of the largest groups. As Table 10 shows the range in the final sample is from 30 to 900 members with a mean of 261 active adult members.

The groups that responded to the second survey are more likely to be seeking new members than those groups that only completed the first survey. 83.3% of the follow-up respondents were seeking new members whereas 77.6% of the original respondents were. Thus, groups that participated can probably be understood as more active in proselytizing, but not markedly different from other American Buddhist organizations.

Table 11
Descriptive Statistics of Cultural (n=47) and Convert Buddhists (n=108)

| Descriptive Statistics | Convert Buddhists | Cultural Buddhists | Total |
|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Gender | | | |
| Male | 40% (42) | 55% (26) | 44% (68) |
| Female | 60% (64) | 45% (21) | 56% (85) |
| Age | | | |
| Median | 52 | 62 | 55 |
| Mean | 52.5 | 62.8 | 55.5 |
| Standard Deviation | 12.4 | 15.0 | 14.0 |
| Citizen of USA | 97% (104) | 83% (38) | 93% (142) |
| Currently Married | 44% (47) | 68% (32) | 52% (79) |
| College Graduate | 73% (78) | 66% (31) | 71% (109) |

Finally, in regards to what type of Buddhism is practiced, each group was asked to choose all forms of Buddhism in which they engaged. This included the broad schools of Mahayana, Theravada and Vajrayana as well more particular forms such as Zen, Pure Land and Soka Gakkai. Only the most common responses are listed in Table 10, with all other forms composing fewer than 10% of either group. Pure Land Buddhism was the most common selection in the first wave of surveys (29.9%) and

composed and even larger portion of the follow-up respondents (50.0%). The only school of practice that dropped off sharply was Mahayana, going from 26.4% to 10.0%. This is especially odd given that Pure Land is typically considered a type of Mahayana Buddhism.

Table 11 shows selected descriptive statistics from the survey of individual Buddhists. Every variable that is used in subsequent regression models is included. In addition, the particular characteristics of converts and cultural Buddhists are shown. In general, the cultural Buddhists include a higher proportion of males, are about a decade older, are less likely to be a citizen of the United States, are more likely to be married, and less likely to be college graduates than their convert counterparts. It is worth noting that the vast majority (83%) of cultural Buddhists in the current sample are citizens of the United States and are college graduates (66%). Even though the two groups appear to be fairly similar in regards to these demographic characteristics, subsequent models will still control for each of these variables. This is to assure that a characteristic like citizenship is not the underlying cause of something like voting behavior, rather than convert or cultural Buddhist status.

Table 12 presents the first set of regression models, which tests the three political affiliation and behavior outcomes. For political party affiliation, which is a seven-point scale ranging from strong republican to strong democrat, none of the six variables was statistically significant. This suggests that among Buddhists, both converts and cultural, overall affiliation is not influenced by any of the variables that are present. Overall, both cultural and convert Buddhists had median categories of leaning

democrat, when not controlling for any of the other variables. This fits with Coleman's (2008:187) characterization of American Buddhists as "left-leaning."

Table 12
OLS Regression Model of Political Party Affiliation and Political Participation, and Binary Logistic Regression for Wanting John Kerry to Win for Cultural and Convert American Buddhists
(Standardized Beta Coefficients for OLS, Odds Ratios for Binary Logistic)

| Independent Variables | Political Party Affiliation | Political Participation | Wanted John Kerry to Win 2004 Presidential Election |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Female | 0.081 | -0.021 | 2.126 |
| Currently Married | 0.055 | -0.080 | 2.261 |
| College Graduate | 0.061 | 0.213* | 1.667 |
| Age | -0.153 | -0.069 | 0.988 |
| Citizen | -0.181 | 0.101 | 0.690 |
| Cultural Buddhist | -0.114 | -0.333** | 0.188** |
| Number of cases | 116 | 132 | 121 |
| R-square | 0.085 | 0.231 | 0.166 |

Reference Category is a male convert Buddhist without a college degree who is not a citizen of the USA and is not currently married.

*P-value <0.05 **P-value <0.01

For political participation, the 9-point scale of political activities leading up to the 2004 election was used. In this case, two of the variables were significant. First, college graduates tended to participate in more political activities. The positive relationship between education and political engagement has been consistently verified in the general American population as well (Hillygus 2005). Second, the most powerful variable in the whole model was whether or not the respondent was a cultural Buddhist. Cultural Buddhists tended to participate in over one and a half fewer activities on average (not shown). Finally, in terms of which candidate people wanted to win, only

cultural/convert status was significant. Convert Buddhists were over 5 times more likely to want John Kerry to win the 2004 presidential election than cultural Buddhists.

Table 13
OLS Regression Model of Attitudes toward Abortion and Marriage and the Family for Cultural and Convert American Buddhists (Standardized Beta Coefficients)

| Independent Variables | Attitude toward Abortion | Marriage and the Family Issues |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Female | -0.212* | -0.141 |
| Currently Married | -0.099 | -0.116 |
| College Graduate | -0.166 | -0.142 |
| Age | -0.030 | 0.253** |
| Citizen | -0.198* | -0.236** |
| Cultural Buddhist | 0.032 | 0.204** |
| Number of cases | 125 | 125 |
| R-square | 0.128 | 0.292 |

Reference Category is a male convert Buddhist without a college degree who is not a citizen of the USA and is not currently married.

*P-value <0.05 **P-value <0.01

Next, we go from general political issues to two key issues in modern political debate. Table 13 shows models for both attitudes toward abortion and views on marriage and family issues. The abortion attitude is a scale of 5 questions, with low values indicating more pro-choice views, and higher values indicating more of a pro-life stance. In this model Buddhist women tend to be more liberal than Buddhist men, and citizens of the United States tend to be more liberal than non-citizens. Cultural and convert Buddhists appear to be no different in regards to attitudes toward abortion. The marriage and family issues scale again ranges from liberal at the low end to more conservative for higher scores. In this model age is the strongest predictor, with older respondents being more conservative. Citizens of the United States tend to be less conservative. Cultural Buddhists tend to be more conservative than convert Buddhists.

Thus, even controlling for differences like citizenship, marital status, and age, Buddhists who were brought up in the tradition tend to take more conservative views toward the family than people who chose Buddhism later in life.

Table 14
OLS Regression Model of Attitudes toward Iraq War and Political Tolerance for Cultural and Convert American Buddhists (Standardized Beta Coefficients)

| Independent Variables | Attitude toward Iraq War | Political Tolerance |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Female | -0.098 | 0.109 |
| Currently Married | -0.109 | 0.123 |
| College Graduate | -0.191* | 0.132 |
| Age | 0.179* | -0.311** |
| Citizen | -0.002 | 0.086 |
| Cultural Buddhist | 0.444** | -0.179* |
| Number of cases | 134 | 136 |
| R-square | 0.359 | 0.245 |

Reference Category is a male convert Buddhist without a college degree who is not a citizen of the USA and is not currently married.

*P-value <0.05 **P-value <0.01

Finally, table 14 shows results for two more models looking at attitudes toward the Iraq war and political tolerance. For the scale of views on the Iraq War higher scores indicated more approval for the war and its motives, while a lower score indicated disapproval. College graduates and younger Buddhist respondents tended to be more disapproving of the war. Far and away the strongest indicator of acceptance for the war was whether the respondent was a cultural or convert Buddhist. Convert Buddhists scored over two and a half points lower on the fifteen point scale than cultural Buddhists, indicating far less support for the war. Cultural versus convert status was again important in looking at levels of political tolerance. Cultural Buddhists were less tolerant of atheists, homosexuals, and Muslims teaching in high school than

converts. The only other variable that was significant in this model was age with younger Buddhists being more tolerant. Tolerance has consistently been shown to decrease with age across most cultures (Karpov 1999a, 1999b, Stouffer 1955, Wilson 1994).

Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis of whether American Buddhists who were raised in the tradition are more orthodox and conservative than those who grew up within another faith had mixed results. Converts to Buddhism tend to participate more often in politics, are more likely to want John Kerry to win during the 2004 presidential election, have more liberal views on family and marriage issues, are more opposed to the Iraq war, and tend to be more politically tolerant. Converts are no different than cultural Buddhists in regards to the political party they affiliate with and attitudes toward abortion. In regards to abortion, while it traditionally has been viewed negatively it is largely accepted in many developed Asian countries such as Japan (Seery 2001), thereby helping to explain the lack of difference between immigrants and converts. In sum, while the two are not distinguishable in regards to political party affiliation, cultural Buddhists do appear to be more conservative on a number of politically charged issues.

The difference in regards to political participation is even more impressive given that there is a selection bias toward practicing Buddhist immigrants. In regards to Latino immigrants, Jones-Correa and Leal (2001) have shown that attendance in a church is a strong predictor of political participation. Among Asian American immigrants, attending religious services is associated with higher rates of voting (Lien 2004). Thus, by only sampling from religious organizations it is likely that the current

study includes only those Buddhist immigrants who are the most politically active.

Even so, the findings indicate that they are less engaged than their convert counterparts.

By comparing the current sample of Buddhists to the national random sample of the Baylor Religion Survey it is also possible to see how American Buddhists compare to Americans in general. Findings suggest that both types of Buddhists in the current study are more liberal than the average American. Thus, the public perception that Buddhists are fairly politically progressive is accurate, although it does gloss over important differences between Buddhists. Finally, the high level of convert political participation may help to explain why they continue to be the focus of academic and media attention even though they represent a numerical minority within American Buddhism (Bottomley 1991).

These findings would benefit first by a more thorough testing across the American Buddhist community and subsequently by extension to other religious groups. While larger sample sizes and more representative sampling techniques would clearly make these findings more robust, a larger study would also make it possible to examine whether certain mediating variables are playing a role. Key among these would be a better understanding of the respondent's religious history. While the current study attempts to ascertain whether the respondent was brought up within the tradition or found it later in life, simply asking this of the respondent would be a more direct and accurate approach. On a related note, it would also be helpful to know whether the respondent is an immigrant, and if so from what country, and what generation. Based upon the theory guiding this research it makes sense that the reasons for a cultural Buddhist to be orthodox and conservative would fade away the longer they have been

away from their native country, and even more so if they are in fact a son or daughter of immigrants rather than one themselves. The final piece of information that is likely significant is what form of Buddhism the respondent practices. In particular, it seems likely that practitioners of Theravada would be more orthodox than those of Mahayana. This would require creating four categories; cultural Mahayana, cultural Theravada, convert Mahayana, and convert Theravada. Unfortunately the sample size of the current study made such fine-grained distinctions impractical.

This study tested the idea that immigrant and convert Buddhists were divided on their political views, but such a divide may not be unique to Buddhism. Instead this may be an effect that exists in all religions that transition to new cultures and countries. The proposed mechanism is that immigrants who maintain a foreign religion in the new country are at least religiously traditional. These traditionally religious immigrants are also likely to be more orthodox about their political beliefs. While it is certainly the case that as Nishimura (2008:87) puts it, “Religious organizations provide for both continuity and transition within immigrant communities,” the immigrants who choose to maintain their traditional faith are acting differently from fellow migrants who adopt a new religion such as Christianity. On the other hand, converts from the new country who choose a new religion are acting progressively at least toward religion. Thus, these people may in fact be more progressive and liberal in other worldviews as well.

The most significant extension to this study would be to examine whether the specific finding that American converts to Buddhism are more liberal than Americans who are culturally Buddhist applies to the general case of immigrants and converts for other religions. In particular, the cases of Islam and Hinduism would provide

appropriate comparison groups. Each is a religion that is relatively new to the United States and for which there are both cultural members who were born into the faith and others who chose the tradition later in life. Again the hypothesis would be that converts are more liberal in their political and social views, along with clearly being progressive in their choice of a new religion. Meanwhile, the members who are continuing their traditional faith would be more orthodox and conservative in these views.

Returning to the case of Buddhism, this study was intended to test a particular theory, but also to demonstrate a new solution to the ongoing debates over typologies. While it is important to create accurate and meaningful typologies, in this case for different types of American Buddhists, it is a meaningless exercise if the typology itself becomes the goal. Rather, the purpose should be to create typologies that give us a better way of understanding, both conceptually and statistically, how these different forms of American Buddhism differ. In the same way that the religious tradition scheme developed by Steensland et al. (2000) proved its value by helping to make more accurate predictions about behavior and beliefs, so too typologies of American Buddhism should be expected to make crisper differentiations.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Tangled Web of Buddhism

Introduction

The effects of globalization on Buddhism are clearest in its spread, but are also present in its form (Tamney 2008). It is obvious that Buddhism now exists outside of its traditional homeland of Asia and has established a foothold both in Europe and the United States. What is less obvious is that just as Buddhists have adapted their religion to each new culture they have entered (for China see Smart 1993), so too they have adapted to American culture (Coleman 2008). For example, the laity has become more involved in American Buddhist organizations than was previously the case in Asia (Coleman 2001). Other pronounced changes include Buddhist groups taking on congregational forms in the United States rather than their traditional temple format (Bankston and Zhou 2000), and holding holidays on weekends to coincide with the American work schedule (Bankston and Hidalgo 2008:71).

The primary effect of globalization on Buddhism is that it now exists in cultures where it was unknown a century ago. Historically, two possibilities have existed for Buddhist organizations as they enter new cultures (Coleman 2008:194). The first is that organizational boundaries dissolve and the different varieties of Buddhism mix into eclectic and previously unseen variations. This is what has occurred as Buddhism entered China and Korea. Alternatively, the doctrinal boundaries may become firmer, causing each of the separate traditions to stay exclusive. This has happened in Japan

where each type of Buddhism remains independent and distinct from the others. This study aims to test the theory that varieties of Buddhism will mix and mingle in the United States. The proposed mechanism rests on the idea that doctrinal differences are relative. A foreign religion in a new cultural setting will overcome typical doctrinal boundaries because of the much more substantial differences that exist with the new cultural ethos. In the context of American Buddhism this means that particular schools of Buddhism will overlook their individual differences and work together because of their shared larger differences with the Judeo-Christian culture in which they now reside.

Religious organizations are quite adept at creating social boundaries in the form of outgroups. These outgroups are especially powerful in the case of religion because they are composed of individuals who have different worldviews about ultimate truth and the source of salvation (Griffiths 2001). For example, in the United States atheists are less accepted than almost every other minority, either in regards to religion, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Almost half of all Americans would disapprove if their child married an atheist (Edgell et al. 2006). At some level it is necessary to create such divisions in order to provide a reason for members to be part of a particular religion. In fact, a central theory of the “new paradigm” of the sociology of religion states that groups that are in a higher state of tension with society will tend to grow more quickly (Stark and Finke 2000). Thus, within certain limits, having stronger distinctions from non-members makes members more committed. Religions have a special capability to create such separations since most religious worldviews suggest destinations in the

afterlife and rewards in the present that will be quite different for members from nonmembers.

One important facet of this theory is that such boundaries are relative. They are shaped by cultural context and are not universal, either temporally or geographically. For example, while issues of whether or not the Bible should be taken literally are important to many Christians, and an important predictor of many other behaviors (i.e. Tuntiya 2005, Greeley 1993, Ellison and Sherkat 1993), they pale in comparison to issues of whether God exists. This is also the situation for many Buddhist groups who are entering the West. While in Asia basic tenets such as karma and rebirth are taken for granted, this is not the case in the West. Instead, any differences between schools of Buddhism are dwarfed by the distinctions between Buddhism and the predominant Judeo-Christian ethos.¹⁶ As a result this suggests that Buddhist groups will either unite or at least share resources, as if they were part of a shared denomination, rather than competing entities. Preliminary evidence for such a process can be seen in the growing number of non-sectarian and ecumenical Buddhist groups (Morreale 1998).

Several difficulties arise in testing such a hypothesis about Buddhist organizations in the United States. One difficulty in studying Buddhism is that with a few notable exceptions, American Buddhism tends to be composed of individual centers with spiritual leaders that operate independently. This is quite different from Christianity within the United States which is predominantly composed of Protestant

¹⁶ In the same way that Christianity, Islam, and Judaism contain separate schools of practice and belief, so too Buddhism includes such separate schools. Vajrayana, Theravada, and Mahayana are the major schools, with each including further variations, such as Pure Land and Zen. Theravada is the type of Buddhism that is practiced primarily in Southeast Asian and tends to be considered the most orthodox. Vajrayana is also known as Tibetan Buddhism and is typically associated with the Dalai Lama, although this is only one type. Mahayana is the predominant form of Buddhism in Korea, Japan, and China. Furthermore, a growing form of Buddhism in the United States is nonsectarian.

denominations and the Catholic Church.¹⁷ Unlike Christian organizations where data can be gathered through denominational sources, such a choice does not exist with American Buddhism.

Another difficulty in studying American Buddhists is the variety of languages that practitioners speak. Asian languages predominate, but in the United States a variety of languages are used in practicing the religion. A recent study found that among 231 Buddhist centers in the United States the services were held in 15 different languages (Smith 2007). If English is not the first language of the respondent this can prevent adherents from completing traditional surveys.

Finally, any study of a modern religion must account for the possibility that connections exist across national boundaries. This is especially true of American Buddhism, where many organizations are founded by and serve recent immigrants. Thus, both the organizations and individuals occupy networks that are transnational. This can be problematic with traditional methodologies, which use organizations within a single country as the sampling frame.

All these problems can be eliminated or at least alleviated by shifting our focus away from traditional organizational surveys of religious organizations. Instead, the internet is an excellent method of gathering information about these groups and answering the current research question. First, the internet allows us to overcome the necessity for a denomination for centralized information. Instead we can either search the internet or use directories that are posted online to compile a list of Buddhist groups

¹⁷ Two key exceptions include Soka Gakkai International (SGI) and the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA). SGI is a relatively new form of Buddhism that has grown rapidly both in Asia and the United States. BCA are some of the oldest Buddhist institutions in the United States and follow Jodo Shinshu, also known as Pure Land Buddhism.

in the United States. In addition, by using websites and their links as the unit of analysis it is not necessary to survey each individual organization.

The second benefit of internet research is that it overcomes linguistic barriers. Because Buddhism is practiced in numerous languages it is reasonable to expect that many resources may be in languages other than English. By using automated software it is possible to trace connections between organizations independent of the language of the websites. Simply put, software has no preference for whether links are in English or Chinese. Similarly, the third difficulty of crossing national boundaries is eliminated. It is equally easy to note a website that links to a business situated in New Zealand or California. Indeed by its very nature the internet is a transnational structure.

Not only does the internet solve many of the problems associated with studying American Buddhism, but the religion is actually especially well suited to such an analysis. Modernization has affected Buddhism in a number of ways. For example, in Japan sewing robes for monks has taken on a religious quality as an effect of modern production techniques (Riggs 2004). One of the key changes for American Buddhism is the way that technology has allowed immigrants to remain in communication with their native countries, thereby helping to maintain a stronger sense of connection (Eck 2002). The effects of modernization among American Buddhists can be seen most clearly in the use of the World Wide Web by Buddhist organizations. Many Buddhist groups are using the internet to help spread their message worldwide and attract new members (Prebish 1999). Indeed, the socioeconomic characteristics of American Buddhists are similar to those who are most likely to use the internet. They tend to be well educated with above average income (Wuthnow and Hackett 2003), the same characteristics as

those who use the internet the most frequently (Pew Internet and American Life Project 2006).

The doctrine of Buddhism in particular makes it a religion that is well suited to the use of the internet and in turn a good case for study. As Zaleski (1997) notes, both the membership and beliefs of the religion fit well with the new use of technology. The philosophy of Buddhism tends to emphasize emptiness and interconnectedness, both ideas which are easily applied to the internet: Buddhism has as a central assumption the idea that all things are intrinsically empty and illusion. This fits well with the internet since it is easily understood that websites and chat rooms are not physically in existence. The idea that all things are inherently interconnected is also present in Buddhist doctrine and again is an idea that appears often in thinking about the *World Wide Web*.

Using the Internet for Social Research

The internet itself has been the focus of a number of sociological studies. Generally, the internet acts as a complement to preexisting structures and methods of interaction (DiMaggio et al. 2001). The most common use of the internet and new technologies to aid sociological research has been in the use of web based surveys. In particular, e-mail surveys and browser-based surveys have opened up an entirely new realm of research (see Simsek and Veiga 2001; Stanton and Rogelberg 2001). This can create benefits such as making it easier to reach underrepresented groups, as well as new difficulties, such as multiple responses by the same individual (Mustanski 2001). One of the major advantages of the internet is in the vast amount of information that is available. This benefit can also be problematic, however, since new techniques are

necessary to search through so much data, whether it is qualitative or quantitative (Weare and Lin 2000).

One type of study using the internet itself as the field of focus is on website links. A number of studies in areas as diverse as women's NGOs (Pudrovska and Ferree 2004) to globalization (Brunn and Dodge 2001) have used the analysis of website links as the central area of interest. This can either mean performing qualitative content analysis on the material that is linked to by certain websites or quantitatively examining the number and proportion of links to certain types of websites.

The current weakness of most internet research is that while it accomplishes research that was not previously possible, it is not qualitatively new. For example, in their study of hate group mission statements, Adams and Roscigno (2005) make use of the internet to analyze data that is similar to what paper documents could provide. One researcher who is using the internet to explore new territory is William Bainbridge. Bainbridge presents a number of innovative methods for using the internet to understand social networks. One example of research that would never have been possible before the advent of the internet is the study of virtual communities. Bainbridge (2007b) uses two popular online games as social laboratories where it is possible to witness the creation of social institutions. In addition it is possible to witness how people react to circumstances like reincarnation that would not be achievable outside of an online experience.

Bainbridge also uses recommender systems, like those of Amazon.com and Netflix, to determine clusters of cultural products (2007a). By looking at which consumption products are purchased by the same users it is possible to determine which

items share the same social space. In addition, he uses website link analysis to determine the association among different types of websites. Rather than just looking at the number of times a site links to other types of sites, he examines the number of shared links for sites that support and oppose particular religious groups. The current study will focus on this avenue of analyzing website links, both in regards to quality and quantity.

Internet and Religion

As a new form of communication, the internet has become the focus of much recent study. In particular, the internet has provided new opportunities for religious organizations, both in providing information and facilitating recruitment, as well as broadcasting worship services. Studies of this interplay between religion and the internet have tended to focus on the most extreme forms. One case of this is looking at new religions that only exist online, such as the Church of the Subgenius, Cyber-Voodoo, and Virtual Church of the Blind Chihuahua (Hojsgaard 2005). On the more mundane side are religions that use websites and other online tools for conventional tasks such as sending e-mails where they previously would have physically mailed information, or posting hours of services. Even so, these basic functions can have profound impacts, such as making it possible for small new religious movements to create a global presence in ways that previously would have been impossible (i.e. Mebius 2008).

One study that combines an examination of website links and religious groups is Scheitle's (2005) study of American churches. Using a subsample of congregations from the National Congregations Study, Scheitle (2005) was able to analyze the website

links of 231 churches in the United States. By looking at the types and numbers of external links from each church's website this study was able to test theories about the boundaries of religious organizations. Those groups that were the most theologically conservative tended to link the least to other religious congregations. American Buddhists tend to be very liberal (Coleman 2008:187) and extending Scheitle's work this would suggest that the groups would tend to link to many other religious organizations.

Specific studies of online Buddhism have been quite limited. For example, in reviewing the literature of online Buddhist communities in Korea, Kim (2005) found only two prior studies that related to the topic and that "Unfortunately, these studies have been either very preliminary case descriptions or illusive conceptual discussions" (Kim 2005: 141). Similarly, studies of Buddhist websites or uses of the internet by Buddhist organizations in the United States have been limited. One exception is Zaleski's (1997) study of the Zen Mountain Monastery which used the internet to perform Dharma Combat. This is a ritual in the Zen tradition that involves the teacher challenging the student regarding truth statements. While it was possible to replicate such a ritual remotely via the internet, in this case the religious leader thought it was much less useful than the face-to-face experience. Indeed, there is little evidence that cyber rituals have become popular in any Buddhist tradition.

Hayes (1999) gives several observations about doctrine and practice using Buddhist chat rooms as the source of material. On a broader scale, Prebish (2004) explores the ways in which new technologies can allow for a greater sense of community among Buddhists around the world. In particular, he examines the idea of a

“cybersangha” which is an extension of the Buddhist concept of Sangha, or community of believers.

In a study of Americans who browse Buddhist websites, Ostrowski (2006) found that the users tended to be educated, white, and typically unaffiliated with a Buddhist temple. This fits with the known sociodemographic characteristic of American Buddhist converts (Wuthnow and Hackett 2003). A key point to note is that Ostrowski was looking at two websites that provided information about Buddhism. She was not examining the websites of Buddhist organizations. For this reason, the current study is more likely to be analyzing websites that are used by practicing, affiliated Buddhists, rather than those who are just gathering information about it.

Because there has been little research on the websites of Buddhist organizations, the starting point of the current study will be to determine basic characteristics of these websites and their links. This includes both the mundane and the spiritually consequential elements of the websites. By examining all the weblinks from organizational websites, it is possible to combine both the secular and religious networks. This has the benefit of not assuming that either is predominant, but rather allowing the data to demonstrate the types and quantity of connections that exist among the websites of American Buddhist organizations.

Hypothesis

Since the population of interest in this study is websites, we will be examining the ways that Buddhist organizations share weblinks and link to each other’s sites. The hypothesis to be tested is that:

H₁: There will be no association between the religious school of American Buddhist organizational websites and the religious school of websites to which they link.

In practice this means that Theravada organizations will be just as likely to link to other Theravada websites as they will be to link to Mahayana, Vajrayana, or unaffiliated Buddhist organizations.

Data and Methods

In order to gather an initial list of websites, the world Buddhist directory of Buddhnet.net was consulted. As of January 25th, 2008, the directory included 2,028 Buddhist organizations for the United States of America. This is quite similar to the number of centers listed in the Pluralism Project's directory, of 2,217 (Eck 2009). The Pluralism Project directory was not used, because only 683 of the listings include website addresses. In total 1,207 of the Buddhnet.net listings included a website address. These are different from the Buddhist Web Links listings that Buddhnet.net includes on a separate page. Among the used addresses, only 1,068 were unique, meaning that 139 of the web addresses provided were actually used by more than one organization. For all subsequent analysis only the unique websites are used. This is due to the fact that shared weblinks would be meaningless, because a single website that is included more than once will necessarily share its own links.

Each of these website addresses was copied into a format that the software program Web Link Validator 5.0 could analyze. This software is able to find every website that is linked to from a webpage, both external and internal. For the current analysis only external links were of interest. Once the software found external links for all 1,068 websites they were put into a database in order to compile the total numbers of

websites and compare shared links. In addition, each of these websites was visited individually to determine the school of Buddhism that the organization practiced. The four possible codings included Mahayana, Vajrayana, Theravada, and other. An “other” categorization meant the website’s affiliation was either unclear, nonsectarian, or indicated an affiliation with more than one major school of Buddhism. While these types of groups may be conceptually distinct, for simplicity of interpretation they are collapsed together.

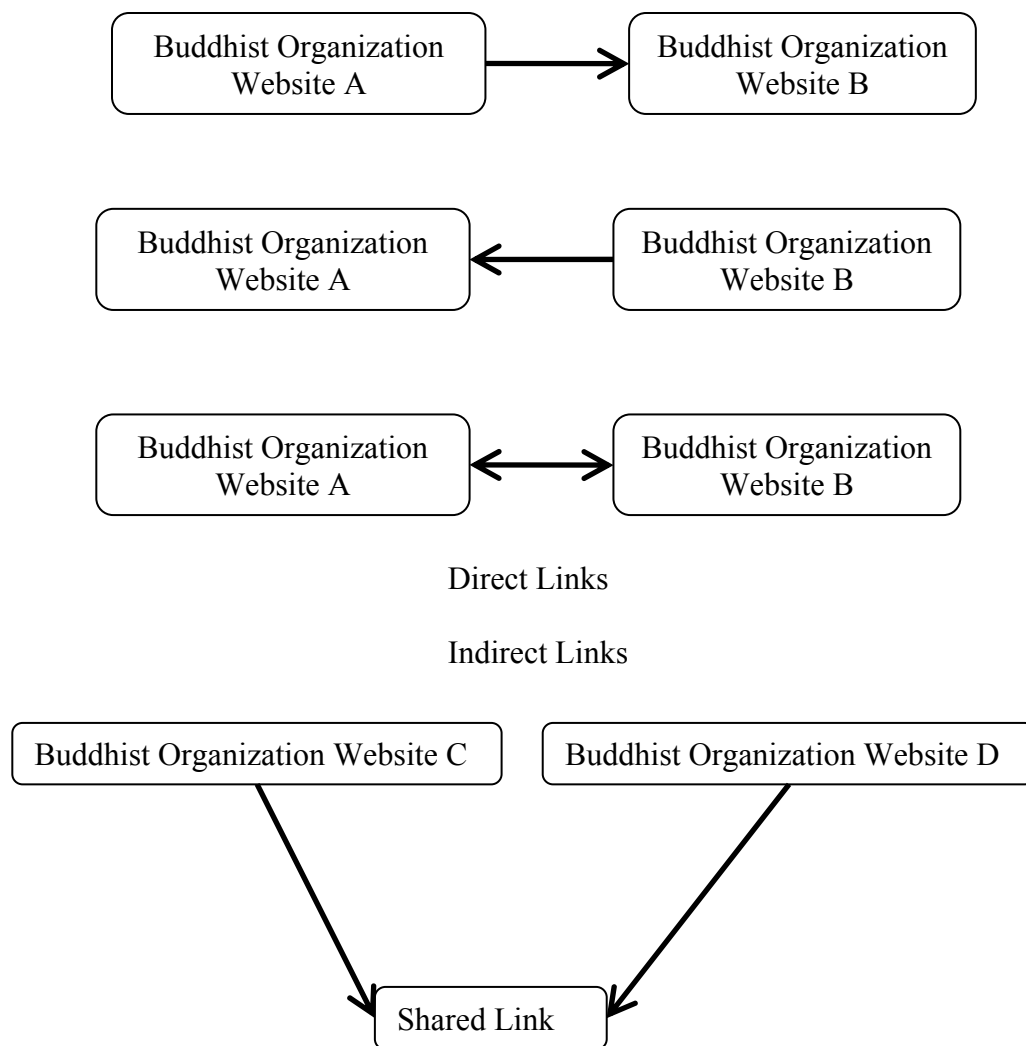


Figure 1. Direct and Indirect Links

Two types of website connections are included in this study, direct links and indirect links. Figure 1 gives a simplified diagram of all the possible connections both direct and indirect. A *direct link* means that two of the websites from the original directory in some way link to each other. This can either be mutual or one-way. An *indirect link* is a case where the two Buddhist organization websites both link to the same external site. They may or may not also be directly linked. Even more distantly removed links could and have been used in previous research (Bader et al. under review), but for the current study the number of links between indirect links would be too excessive for this analysis. The reason for this difference is that the current study starts with a directory of over 1,000 websites, whereas the Bader et al. (under review) study included less than 50 organization in the initial listing.

Figure 2 shows a network diagram of a random sample of 10 of the Buddhist websites. While this is not necessarily representative, it does give a visual representation of what the connections or the lack thereof look like. Only Namgyal.org and AwakeningHeartSangha.Org directly link. The first interesting element is that the four Buddhist websites at the bottom do not connect directly or indirectly to any other site (among the ten sites in question). The six other sites share a large number of connections. In order to display the types and strength of connections different lines were used. The thickness of the lines indicates the number of shared sites. The most shared connections is three, between dalailamafoundation.org and both peoriazen.com and namgyal.org. Dashed lines represent purely secular shared links, solid lines are purely religious shared links, and dashed and dotted indicate both types exist. Thus, among these links lotusinthedesert.org has almost exclusively religious shared links.

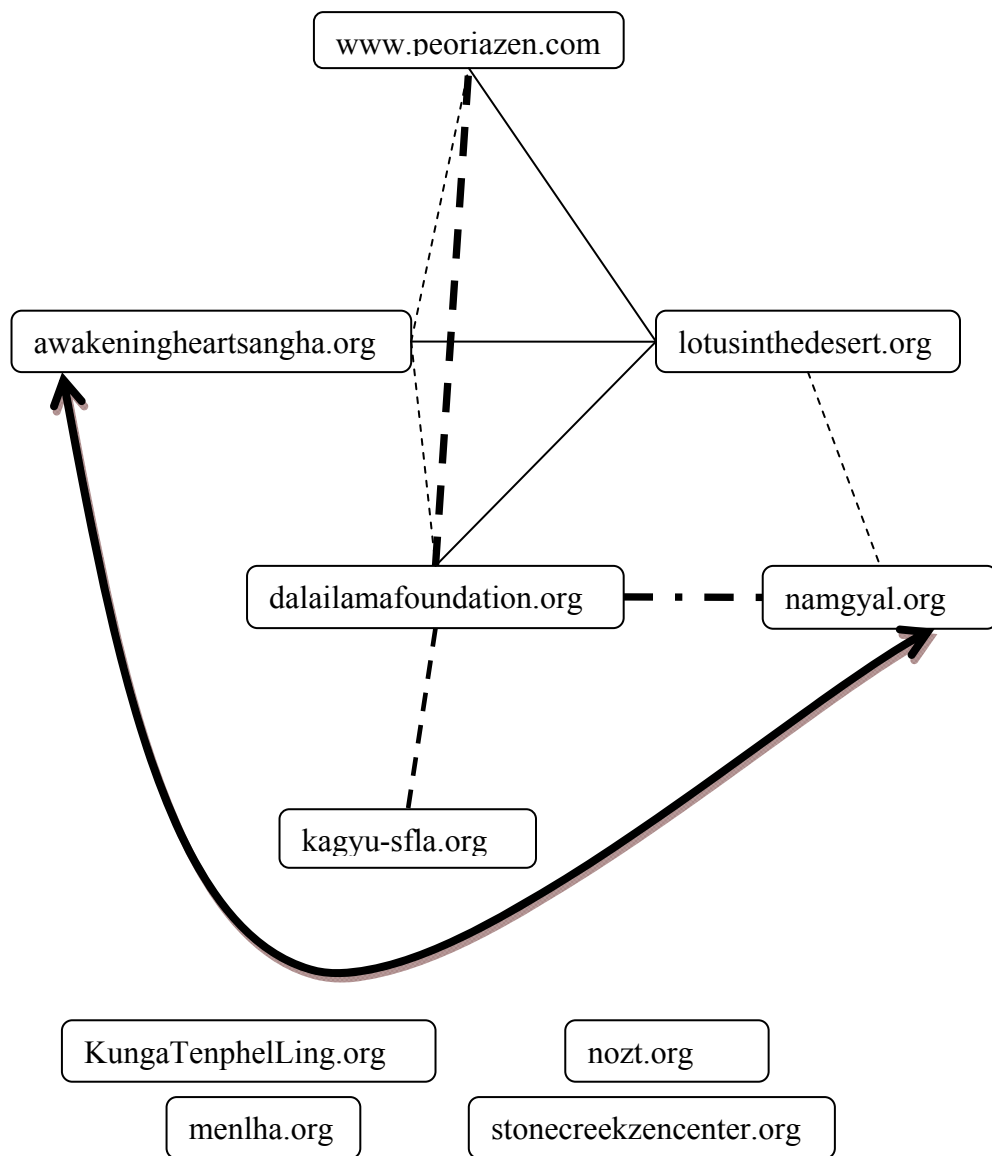


Figure 2. Sample Link Analysis of Buddhist Organizations

Meanwhile dalailamafoundation.org has largely secular connections. Already this sample shows that many Buddhist groups from different schools of practice are using the same religious resources. For example, lotusinthedesert.org is a Theravada site that shares religious links with peoriazen.com which is a Mahayana site and dalailamafoundation.org, a Vajrayana site. Similarly, with the overall set of Buddhist

sites many organizations from different religious traditions make use of the same online materials. These organizations seem to connect to whatever resources are most useful, rather than restricting themselves to websites that share their school of practice.

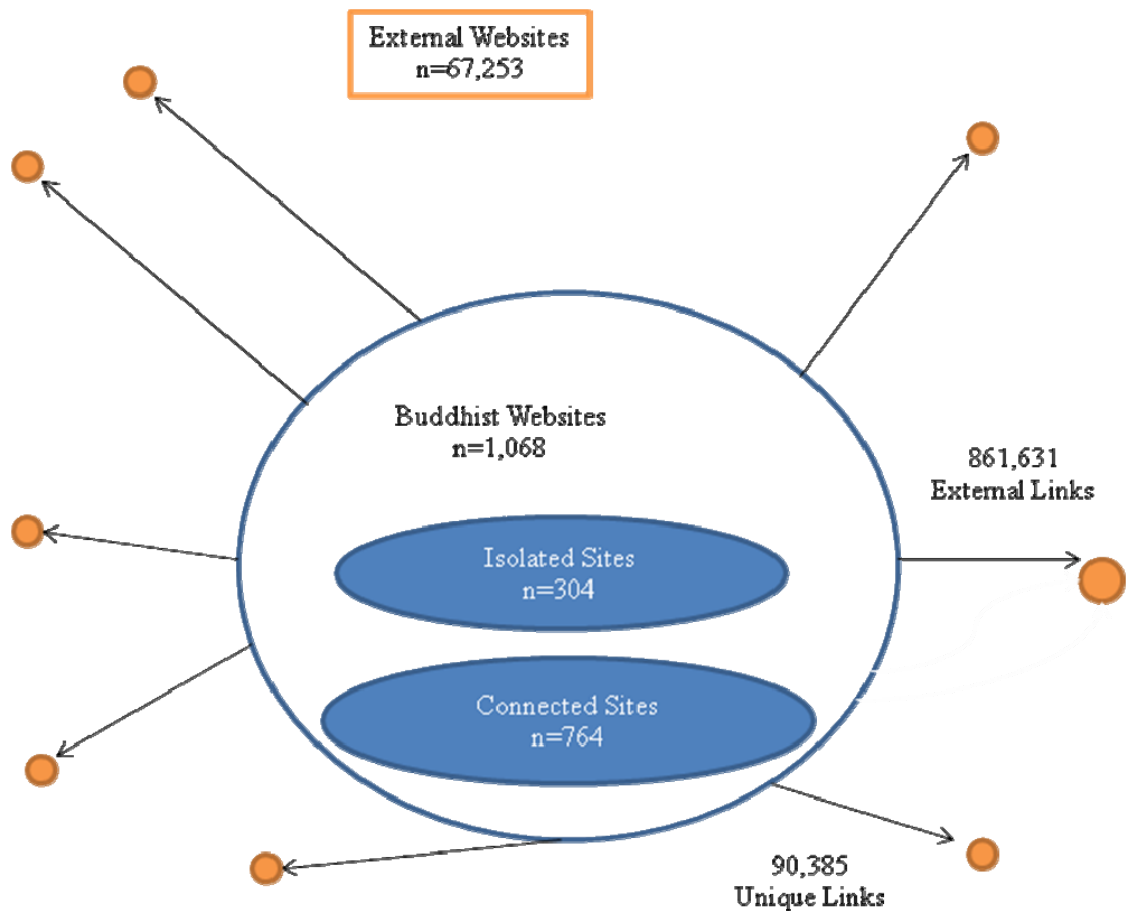


Figure 3. Summary of Website Links

Results

Figure 3 summarizes the most essential characteristics of the websites and their links. Among the 1,068 American Buddhist websites there were a total of 861,631 external links, which constituted 67,253 unique websites. The reason for this large difference is that many of the Buddhist websites linked to the same sites, as well as linking to them many different times. Thus, if a site linked to google.com 20 different

times this would only count as one unique website, but 20 different links. In fact, the mean number of times each external website was linked to was 12.8. The median however was only 1, since over 40,000 of the external links were only connected to once. This was balanced by a few outliers that had over 10,000 connections.

For the remainder of this study reference will only be made to the number of times that websites are linked to uniquely. Unique links only count any number of direct connections from site A to site B as a single unique link. This means that for the current study repetition of connections is ignored. In total, there are 90,385 unique links from the initial list of American Buddhist organizations to the 67,253 external websites.

Table 15
Summary of Connections

| |
|---|
| Any Type of Link: 89% (n=952) |
| Both Direct and Indirect Links: 39% (n=418) |
| Direct Links: 52% (n=557) |
| Indirect Links: 76% (n=813) |
| >10 Indirect Links: 66% (n=701) |
| >100 Indirect Links: 26% (n=283) |
| Among Connected Sites |
| Mean Indirect Links: 90 |
| Median Indirect Links: 5 |

Table 15 summarizes the website connections. Among the initial list of Buddhist websites, 557 had *direct links*. This leaves only 511 that are isolated in the sense that they neither link to any of these other sites, nor do any of the sites link to them. Even among isolated websites this certainly does not mean there are no organizational connections between these groups. For example, these websites are

drawing on many of the same virtual resources, as indicated by the number of sites they shared. By counting sites that two Buddhist websites linked to it is possible to see how many indirect connections exist between the sites. For example, both bodhipath.org and diamondway.org link to Buddhism Today's website (as do 14 other sites). Over three-quarters (n=813) of the websites share a common link with at least one other website in the directory, and 66% (n=701) share links with at least 10 other websites, while over a quarter (n=283) share over one hundred.

Table 16
Twenty Most Common Shared External Links

| External Link | # of Buddhist Websites that Link |
|---|----------------------------------|
| https://www.paypal.com/ | 236 |
| http://www.amazon.com/ | 133 |
| http://maps.google.com/ | 128 |
| http://www.adobe.com/ | 119 |
| http://www.google.com/ | 118 |
| http://www.mapquest.com/ | 118 |
| http://www.geocities.com/ | 114 |
| http://www.buddhanet.net/ | 108 |
| http://groups.yahoo.com/ | 102 |
| http://www.accesstoinight.org/ | 93 |
| http://maps.yahoo.com/ | 85 |
| http://www.youtube.com/ | 81 |
| http://download.macromedia.com/ | 80 |
| http://www.shambhala.org/ | 80 |
| http://www.tricycle.com/ | 63 |
| http://www.dharmanet.org/ | 59 |
| http://fpdownload2.macromedia.com/ | 56 |
| http://www.google-analytics.com/ | 55 |
| http://kadampa.org/ | 53 |
| http://www.snowlionpub.com/ | 49 |

The mean number of sites that one of the starting websites shares links with is 90 and the median is 57. Again this skew reflects the fact that a few outliers have far

more shared sites than most of the cases. In total, 89% of the original Buddhist websites share an indirect or direct link with one of the other original websites. Very few of the organizations fail to connect with one of the other American Buddhist organizations in question.

Table 17
Twenty Most Common Shared Religious External Links

| External Link | # of Buddhist Website that Link | Type of Site |
|---|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| http://www.buddhanet.net/ | 108 | General Buddhist Information |
| http://www.accesstoinsight.org/ | 93 | Information about Theravada |
| http://www.shambhala.org/ | 80 | Information about Shambhala |
| http://www.tricycle.com/ | 63 | Buddhist Magazine |
| http://www.dharmanet.org/ | 59 | General Buddhist Information |
| http://www.kadampa.org/ | 53 | Buddhist Denomination |
| http://www.snowlionpub.com/ | 49 | Buddhist Publications |
| http://www.dharma.org/ | 45 | Buddhist Centers |
| http://www.wisdompubs.org/ | 45 | Buddhist Publications |
| http://www.tharpa.com/ | 41 | Buddhist Publisher |
| http://www.shambhalasun.com/ | 41 | Buddhist Magazine |
| http://www.spiritrock.org/ | 39 | Buddhist Center |
| http://www.parallax.org/ | 38 | Buddhist Publisher |
| http://www.shambhala.com/ | 37 | Buddhist Publications |
| http://www.kagyu.org/ | 36 | Buddhist Center |
| http://www.ciolek.com/ | 36 | General Asian Studies |
| http://www.plumvillage.org/ | 36 | Buddhist Center |
| http://www.beliefnet.com/ | 34 | General Religious Information |
| http://www.fpmt.org/ | 34 | Buddhist Denomination |
| http://www.bpf.org/ | 33 | Buddhist Center |

The 20 most common websites that these organizations linked to are shown in Table 16. This only counts the absolute number of unique Buddhist websites that link to the site in question. Thus, even if one site was linked to 100 times by a single site, this would only count as one unique link. Many of the most commonly linked sites are

secular. In this case 13, of the sites are clearly secular, including a mix of search engines (Yahoo, Google), driving directions (Mapquest, Yahoo Maps) and other popular sites (Amazon, Youtube). While this shows a similar use of internet resources, it is likely that many websites link to these sites. In order to get a better sense of the particularly Buddhist shared resources Table 17, shows the most common religious sites.

Of the top 20 non-secular websites, 18 are explicitly Buddhist, and the other two ciolek.com and beliefnet.com have sizeable portions of material about Buddhism. One of the more common types of site is book publishers, which include tharpa.com, shambhala.com, parallax.org, wisdompubs.org, and snowlionpub.org. In addition, Buddhist print publications account for two of the top twenty sites; tricycle.com and shambhalasun.com. It appears that one of the primary uses of modern technology is to provide users with more traditional means of gathering information.

Table 18
Content of Top 100 Shared External Links

| | | Total Number of Unique Links |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------------------------|
| Nonreligious | 43% (n=43) | 2,355 |
| Religious | 57% (n=57) | 1,847 |
| Generally Religious | | 7% (n=4) |
| Exclusively Buddhist | | 93% (n=53) |
| Buddhist Center | | 28% (n=15) |
| General Buddhist Information | | 20% (n=11) |
| Buddhist Umbrella Organization | | 17% (n=9) |
| Buddhist Publisher | | 9% (n=5) |
| Buddhist Magazines and Journals | | 9% (n=5) |
| Buddhist Store | | 4% (n=2) |
| Other | | 11% (n=6) |

Table 18 is a content analysis of the top 100 websites, all of which are linked to by at least 18 of the Buddhist websites. As with the top 20 websites, generic nonreligious websites are still common, but here they now account for less than half of these sites. Even so, by looking at the number of unique links to each type of website it is possible to determine how often they are linked to by Buddhist groups. In this case there are 2,355 unique links to the nonreligious websites, which averages to 55 Buddhist websites linking to each of the nonreligious sites that are in the top 100. The sites with religious content have only 1,847 unique links, averaging to only 32 Buddhist organizations per site. There are many sites that have useful religious content for these Buddhist groups, but there is more demand for the conventional secular content.

Among the websites with religious content, the vast majority (93%) deal exclusively with Buddhist issues. Of these, specific Buddhist centers are the most common type of site. All three schools of Buddhism are well represented among these websites. The next most common type of Buddhist site is general information websites. These range from providing the history of the religion to giving suggestions on how to meditate. With these sites there tends not to be any explicit school of interest, but rather a sort of generic form of Buddhism, or all schools receiving equal representation.

The next most common type of Buddhist site, with nine of the top 100 external shared links, are umbrella organizational sites. These include Soka Gakkai International's homepage and are similar to the websites that most Christian denominations have. They tend to have a list of centers and information about their beliefs and mission. This is interesting since there are relatively few such organizations in the United States. It appears that perhaps because of their scarcity they are a valued

commodity for Buddhist groups of all varieties even if they don't share the same beliefs and practices. Publishers of Buddhist books and Buddhist magazines and journals compose a sizable portion of the websites. Finally, there were other websites that did not fit into any of these categories including stores and a Buddhist radio station.

Table 19
Direct Links between Buddhist Websites

| School of Buddhism | Theravada (17%) | Mahayana (36%) | Vajrayana (29%) | Other (18%) | Total |
|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------|
| Theravada | 35 (17%) | 44 (21%) | 81 (39%) | 50 (24%) | 210 |
| Mahayana | 91 (21%) | 145 (34%) | 107 (25%) | 89 (21%) | 432 |
| Vajrayana | 81 (27%) | 115 (39%) | 74 (25%) | 26 (9%) | 296 |
| Other | 45 (16%) | 100 (35%) | 90 (31%) | 52 (18%) | 287 |
| Chi-Squared Test | 2.36 | 0.10 | 2.66 | 0.04 | 1,225 |
| *P≤0.05 **P≤0.01 | | | | | |

In order to test the research hypothesis, table 19 shows the number of direct links between the Buddhist organizations broken down by school of practice. As a point of reference, the uppermost percentages refer to the presence of that type of school among the overall set of 1,068 organizations. For example, 29% indicates that 29% of all the initial Buddhist organizations in the dataset are exclusively Vajrayana. By comparing this to the column percentages it is possible to see whether organizations within a particular school of Buddhism are more or less likely to link to another particular school of Buddhism.

By running chi-squared tests for each school of Buddhism it is possible to determine whether they are linking to their own school more often than would be expected with a random distribution. In this case chi-squared values were created as if there were only two categories, the school in question and any other school. This means that for a Theravada website the four possibilities include a Theravada website linking to another Theravada website, Theravada linking to non-Theravada, non-Theravada linking to Theravada, and non-Theravada linking to non-Theravada. Of the four significance tests, one for each school, plus one for other, none turned out to be statistically significant. Thus, it appears that Buddhist organizations are no more likely to link to other Buddhist organizations that they share a school with than those that they do not. This lends support to the hypothesis that Buddhist organizations do not prefer to link to websites that are in their same school of practice.

Discussion

All Buddhist organizations appear to link to many secular resources. These types of resources may be very mundane, such as driving directions and a way to sell books online, but they open up possibilities that previously would have required massive financial and technical resources. This is a similar pattern to the virtual resource usage of nondenominational congregations in the United States (Bader et al. under review). By studying the website links of independent churches Bader et al. (under review) found that these organizations relied heavily on secular websites to provide basic services. In both cases the groups in question represent a small portion of the population and do not have umbrella organizations that can provide such capabilities. As such, they compensate by drawing on secular virtual resources. By

contrast, many congregational websites that are associated with large denominations tend to have a cookie cutter format which is provided by the denomination and tends to focus on religious external links.

Bader et al. (under review) also found that nondenominational churches in the United States tend to use similar internet resources, even though they do not directly interact. The independent churches tend to rely on largely evangelical material as well as similar secular websites to provide internet resources. Thus, even though these churches are organizationally disconnected they share a body of virtual resources due to occupying a similar social space. This is the same process that exists among American Buddhist organizations. Almost all Buddhist groups in the United States are independent, but they still connect to the same Buddhist and secular websites as other American Buddhist centers. These are not the only similarities that exist between American Buddhism and non-denominational congregations. Both groups have grown substantially in the past forty years in the United States. Non-denominational congregations now contain an estimated 11% of all religious attendees in the United States (Chaves, Knoiechny, Beyerlein, and Barman 1999). Similarly, American Buddhism had very few members prior to the 1960's, but now includes over two million adherents (Baumann 1997).

Conclusion

The findings of this study support the proposed hypothesis. American Buddhist organizational websites appear to share a number of links with each other. This is the case for secular resources like maps and payment methods, as well as spiritual materials. In regards to shared spiritual resources, there appears to be no preference for

materials within a particular school of Buddhism. Indeed, the groups of each school appear to link to others schools at almost exactly the same rate as we would expect with a random distribution. Each of these findings indicates that Buddhist groups in the United States function in much the same way as non-denominational congregations. Due to the lack of an overarching denomination, each group must rely on similar resources as their co-religionists both in terms of secular and religious virtual products. Furthermore, due to the exotic nature of Buddhism within a Judeo-Christian landscape, any differences between schools are washed away in comparison to the differences between religions.

American Buddhism is composed of a diverse group of people and religions. While Buddhism in the United States has tended to take on a congregational rather than temple form, it has not adopted the denominational organizational structure (Yang and Ebaugh 2001). This paper suggests that a better analogy is the nondenominational churches of the United States. By looking at the network structure of American Buddhist websites, it is possible to distinguish the extent of interconnection, both at the direct and indirect level.

One important contribution of this study is showing ways in which modern technologies can be used to study social phenomenon. A primary difficulty seems to be using the new tools to study the new phenomenon. This should not require reinventing the wheel, but rather building on existing methods. For example, in the current study the original purpose of Web Link Validator was as a commercial piece of software for checking broken links. This suggests that while it may be necessary to employ new techniques in studying social phenomenon that only exist due to modern technology, the

tools already exist. Another example of this is Bainbridge's (2007a) use of recommender systems that are already present on many commercial websites. By using data intended for marketing purposes, he was able to better understand the cultural relationships between different products.

One benefit of this study, and similar ones that rely on the internet for data, is the easy extension to broader contexts. Already, this study was able to extend beyond national and linguistic boundaries even though it started with a sample of websites for organizations in the United States. In addition, the initial listing of websites could easily be extended to include sites from another country to see how many connections exist between groups in the United States and those in China, or to include all organizations in the world. The current study could be extended in such a way by simply adding all the sites listed on Buddhnet.net rather than only those in the United States.

This study tested the theory that the doctrinal boundaries between religions are relative. These boundaries are not universal, but rather are contextual. By looking at American Buddhism it is possible to examine a religion with many separate strains that is growing in a new cultural setting. Because many Buddhist truth claims are substantially different than the predominant Judeo-Christian ethos the particular disagreements between particular sects becomes less significant. By using the internet it was possible to show that Buddhist organizations of one school of practice are just as likely to use the virtual resources of each of the other Buddhist schools. This suggests that Buddhism in the United States is undergoing a similar mixing and mingling that took place upon its entry to China and Korea, and not the route that took place in Japan.

More importantly this study helps to suggest the mechanism behind such a transformation. Indeed the effects of relative doctrinal diversity should be testable in a number of other circumstances. These include the presence of other non-western religions in the United States, such as Hinduism. In addition, these same effects should exist historically, and may help explain why it is that Buddhism went through different processes as it entered different Asian countries for the first time. While doctrine is certainly important to religious organizations and adherents the same elements are not universally significant.

CHAPTER FIVE

A House Divided

Introduction

One commonality of all religious organizations is that the members share certain beliefs. Furthermore, these beliefs are central to reality.¹ The acceptance and understanding of these beliefs, however, is by no means perfect, leading to congregations where all members do not agree on everything. For example, Dougherty et al. (Forthcoming) found that even in a small Southern Baptist congregation there was variation in more detailed religious beliefs such as who will get into heaven, images of God, and religious identity. While belief as an essential element of religion is by no means a new area of research, the effect of shared beliefs and lack thereof on the organization's success has not been researched extensively.

There are theoretical reasons why we might expect either homogeneity or heterogeneity of beliefs to cause religious groups to be successful. Clearly, there must be some level of agreement about beliefs and doctrine in order to convince members that there is any reason to belong. This agreement, however, can be over very relativistic ideas, such as that all religious beliefs should be appreciated and allowed. Indeed, many mainline Protestant denominations teach a message of inclusivism, accentuating the validity of a range of more particular truth statements.

¹ The beliefs can even be that nothing is true as with some philosophical versions of Buddhism (Griffiths 1987).

Theoretically, we might expect heterogeneous organizations to be better able to recruit members precisely because they allow more possible beliefs. In other words, their possible pool of new recruits is larger. If only a very particular form of beliefs and behaviors are allowed, then only a very small portion of the population will be potential members. On the other hand, these groups would be more susceptible to losing members to groups that serve a smaller niche by being more exact in which beliefs are allowed. These competing forces suggest that it may actually be some happy medium that is most effective for religious groups that are attempting to grow.

Literature Review

In general, voluntary organizations tend to draw together members who occupy similar “social space” (Popielarz and McPherson 1995). People are more likely to stay in an organization where they share characteristics with their fellow members and are dissimilar from those outside the group. While this has typically been tested by focusing on sociodemographics as the shared characteristics, Scheitle (2007) has examined the ways in which behavior and belief can form a niche. These are especially important factors when considering religious organizations.

Because religious organizations are very powerful forces in the United States, quite a bit of research has gone into examining which denominations and congregations succeed. The goal of these studies is typically to determine how to achieve this success. Some of the theorized causes of growth are beyond the scope of the current study, such as national context. In particular, Roozen and Hadaway (1993) suggest that much of the growth and decline among Protestant denominations is a result of different birthrates. This leads to different numbers of prospective members within each denomination.

Some changes which are theorized to have caused decline among congregations, however, can be tested. Chief among these is the idea that ecumenism and emphasizing similarities rather than emphasizing differences led to decline (Roozen and Hadaway 1993). While this is primarily discussed at the denominational level, the theory suggests that the same mechanism should exist within congregations. The theory predicts that those organizations where members are more exclusive about the sources of salvation will be more successful than those where differences are embraced. One consequence of this is that denominations that actively support universal salvation will lose members (Hoge et al. 1994).

Within the church growth literature the idea that similarity breeds growth is most clearly associated with McGavran's (1970) idea of the homogeneous unit principle. This suggests that people join religions and particular congregations because of shared characteristics including geography, language, education and occupation. What is not clear from this theory is whether similarity in religiosity, either in regards to beliefs or behavior, should act as a barrier to growth of congregations.

One of the few empirical tests of the homogenous unit principle is a study by Leonard (1983) that examined the effects of racial diversity on church growth. Based on interviews and surveys of six multiethnic churches in Philadelphia, Leonard found that congregations can rally around a belief in multiethnic congregations and be proud to be members. He suggests that the homogeneous unit principle as applied to the issue of race is just an effect of general racism in American society. While it may divide people in this cultural setting it is by no means a universal effect.

As Kelley (1972) puts it, strong churches cannot be ecumenical, because strictness is required. By this he means an absolutist, rather than relativist stance on matters of faith. We would expect that those congregations with more diversity of faith should be shrinking or at most staying the same size, while more homogenous congregations should be growing. The current study will also attempt to test such a theory in the context of religious behavior. In particular, it examines homogeneity of religious attendance and private religiosity are related to growth or decline.

A countervailing force in this advantage for religious groups to have a homogeneous membership comes from the need for new membership. Stark and Finke (2000:196) theorize that religions compose a market wherein competition for adherents takes place. An assumption of this theory is that the religious demands of individuals are widely distributed with some wanting a strict form of religious experience and others a more liberal variety. A key consequence of this market economy approach is that organizations can have more potential members if they straddle a larger range of niches. In regards to belief and behavior, this would suggest that a group which is willing to accept members with a wide variety of beliefs will have more growth by virtue of the larger pool of potential recruits.

A combination these two forces is described by Carroll (1985) as the interplay between “specialist” and “generalist” organizations. While the homophily principle and the homogeneous unit principle would suggest that growth comes from specializing on a narrow portion of the population, generalizing can also be beneficial in that it is possible to draw on more potential resources. Indeed, there are theoretical reasons we would expect organizations to be similar. The institutional isomorphism theory

suggests that all groups competing for similar resources will become similar both in structure and methods (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). In particular, it may be that one level of belief and/or behavior diversity is ideal for congregations and therefore mimicked by all groups.² Three competing hypotheses will be tested in this paper.

H1a: Homogeneity of beliefs and behaviors is positively associated with growth in religious congregations.

H1b: Heterogeneity of beliefs and behaviors is positively associated with growth in religious congregations.

H1c: There is a curvilinear relationship between homogeneity of beliefs and behaviors and growth in religious congregations.

Data and Methods

This study will use the United States Congregational Life Survey (USCLS) in order to simultaneously measure the size of religious congregations and their members' beliefs. The current subsample of the USCLS includes 424 congregations and 122,404 congregants. Each individual adherent present at services was surveyed as well as a key informant in the congregation who gave information about the organization itself (Woolever and Bruce 2002: 79-80). In order to account for effects at both the individual and group level this analysis will use information about the congregation as well as aggregated data of the congregants.

One important caveat is that with the available data it is not possible to determine causality. While we can see whether groups that grew or shrank tend to have

² A good way to understand this competition between religious organizations for members is with niche theory. As presented by Hannan and Freeman (1977) ecological models are an important way to understand the interaction of organizations.

members with similar or dissimilar beliefs, the lack of longitudinal data means only association is determined. Thus, while this study is interested in how shared beliefs effect the success of religious organizations, it is possible that growth or decline lead to shared or disparate doctrinal views. For example, groups that are shrinking may lose the members that are on the doctrinal fringe first. Indeed, it is likely that both relationships may be in effect. Similarity could lead to growth, thereby drawing in more people who are like the original members. Even with this limitation, the findings from this study should help to indicate which characteristics occur together.

The dependent measure for these analyses will be growth or decline in number of attendees. A key informant in each congregation was asked to report the attendance every year from 1996 to 2001. From this the percentage, change in attendance was created between 2001 and both 2000 and 1996. Woolever et al. (2006:29) use a similar measure in analyzing the association between gender ratios and growth with the USCLS. This means there are 2 growth (or decline) measures for each organization. Part of the reason for testing two separate sets of years is that missing data exists for up to a quarter of the organizations in any given year. This missing data is spread out, however, with only 36 congregations not having at least one pair of measures. As a result, by testing both short and long-term changes, the effects of missing data are minimized. In addition, it will be possible to notice whether certain effects are temporary or more long-lasting.

As a separate measure of overall growth, the current attendance is used as a dependent variable. Rather than absolute size, this analysis uses the natural logarithm of attendance. This is to assure that the largest groups, which have attendance of over

5,000 people, do not skew the findings, and to create more of a normal distribution of the variable.

The four particular independent variables of interest are based on aggregate scores of all adherents at a given congregation. For each variable, the standard deviation within a congregation is used to measure how much variation there is among respondents on the relevant religious belief or behavior. Alternative measures have previously been used to examine variation within a religious setting, namely the Herfindahl Index and the Entropy Index (i.e. Dougherty 2003). These measures are not appropriate for the current analysis because they assume nominal categories, whereas all the independent variables of interest in the current study are ordinal. For example, the Entropy Index would have the same value in a congregation where half of the members attended once a week and half attended once a year as a congregation where half attended once a month and half attended once a year. By looking at the standard deviation instead we are able to notice these differences.

To measure biblical literalism, six possible views of the bible were provided ranging from “the word of God, to be taken literally” to “an ancient book with little value today.” This was recoded to five categories since the second and third choices of “The Bible is the word of God, to be interpreted in the light of its historical and cultural context” and “The Bible is the word of God, to be interpreted in the light of its historical context and the Church’s teachings” are very similar and not necessarily in the correct order.³ The second measure of belief is a Likert scale response to the statement “All the different religions are equally good ways of helping a person find ultimate truth.”

³ To assure that this recode was not influencing results, all models were also run using the standard deviation based on the six original categories, with no significant differences in the results.

To gauge variation in religious behavior a private and public measure were used. For private religiosity the question asked “How often do you spend time in private devotional activities such as prayer, meditation, reading the Bible alone?” with six responses ranging from “every day” to “never.” Public religiosity is simply how often the respondent attends services at this congregation with seven responses from “this is my first time” to “more than once a week.”

As a measure of diversity the standard deviation of each of these variables is used. Standard deviation was chosen for several reasons. First, it has been used repeatedly in the organizational niche literature (McPherson 1983).⁴ Second, as previously explained, it is more appropriate for ordinal variables than alternative choices such as the Herfindahl or Entropy Index. Each of the models involves ordinary least squares regression with either size or growth as the dependent variable and one of the four independent variables plus controls.

Results

Table 20 shows descriptive statistics of the independent and dependent variables of interest. Maximum possible standard deviation refers to the highest standard deviation possible with the number of categories present. For example, biblical literalism has five possible responses so if one congregant answered in the one category and another in the five category the congregation would have a standard deviation of 2.83. The most important thing to note is that while none of the congregations have the maximum standard deviation, there is substantial variety in regards to the standard

⁴ While other studies have performed a transformation on the standard deviation, such as multiplying by 0.75 (e.g. Scheitle 2007), this is unnecessary in the current study since it is only looking at the width of a particular characteristic, rather than the overall niche size that an organization occupies.

deviations of interest. In other words, there are both congregations with almost no diversity and ones with fairly high levels of diversity. This is important because if only congregations with optimal levels of heterogeneity existed in the first place there would be no variation to compare to the rates of growth. Clearly, some of the growth rates far exceed normal rates. Because of this, subsequent models were run both with and without the outliers and no substantive differences existed for the findings.⁵

As Table 21 shows, almost none of the variables of interest turn out to be significant. In fact, none of the independent variables of interest is significantly related to growth of the congregation. The one exception is that diversity of views of the Bible are associated with smaller churches. This may be because we are not controlling for a relevant variable. The most obvious characteristic of a congregation which is known to matter on a number of issues is the religious tradition, whether it is Evangelical, Mainline Protestant, etc. For this reason a control for religious tradition, using the categories created by Steensland et al. (2000) is included in subsequent models.

Another consideration is the fact that Catholic parishes tend to take a different form than Protestant congregations. The two most important differences for the current study are the fact that in terms of membership size they are much larger than most single Protestant congregations and have much more ethnic diversity, due in large part to a high level of Hispanic adherents. For example, in the USCLS sample, the average attendance at Catholic parishes was 1,570, while it was only 355 for Evangelical Protestant congregations and 259 for Mainline Protestant congregations. Because these

⁵ For this analysis outliers are defined as values 1.5 interquartile ranges above the upper quartile or below the lower quartile. This was only performed for the growth rates, since overall attendance only had 2 outliers, neither of which was far beyond the range.

differences may be related to the higher rates of diversity, each model was run both including Catholic parishes and excluding them.⁶

Table 20
Descriptive Statistics of Independent and Dependent Variables of Interest

| Descriptive Statistics | Number of Cases | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Standard Deviation | Maximum Possible Standard Deviation |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---------|---------|------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| SD of Biblical Literalism | 435 | 0.00 | 1.14 | 0.51 | 0.12 | 2.83 |
| SD of Religious Exclusivity | 436 | 0.44 | 1.73 | 1.11 | 0.16 | 2.83 |
| SD of Private Devotion | 436 | 0.00 | 2.23 | 1.39 | 0.27 | 3.54 |
| SD of Attendance | 436 | 0.00 | 2.40 | 1.06 | 0.35 | 4.24 |
| Log of Overall Attendance | 400 | 2.20 | 8.59 | 5.64 | 1.24 | |
| Percentage Growth over 1 Year | 395 | -91% | 891% | -1% | 47% | |
| Percentage Growth over 5 Years | 345 | -96% | 1,400% | 30% | 103% | |

Data is from 2001 United States Congregational Life Surveys

In regards to the independent variables of interest, by only looking at the standard deviation we are only testing for a linear relationship. In particular, a significant finding could only indicate that either higher levels of belief and behavior

⁶ Evangelical Protestant congregations may also be different because of their avowed intention to gain new members. While other denominations may not see growth as a sign of success this is typically a central goal for evangelicals. For that reason models were also run that excluded Evangelical Protestant congregations with no substantive difference in the findings.

diversity lead to more growth or that less diversity leads to more growth. In fact, theoretically it is more likely that some middle level of diversity would be most beneficial. A hypothetical religious group that contains members with all possible beliefs or a group where everyone has exactly the same level of belief and religiosity will both probably do less well than a group with a mix of each. We can still test which mix is most related to growth by including a quadratic term of the standard deviation. This will allow us to test whether a curvilinear relationship exists between the diversity of belief or behavior and growth rates.

Table 21
Pearson Correlation Matrix of Standard Deviations of Belief and Behavior by Growth and Overall Attendance (Number of cases in parentheses)

| Independent Variables | Log of Attendance | Growth over 1 Year | Growth over 5 Years |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| View of the Bible | -0.135** (n=399) | -0.020 (n=394) | 0.040 (n=344) |
| Religious Exclusivity | 0.028 (n=400) | 0.045 (n=395) | -0.026 (n=345) |
| Frequency of Attendance | 0.002 (n=400) | -0.030 (n=395) | -0.039 (n=345) |
| Private Religiosity | 0.092 (n=400) | -0.020 (n=395) | -0.026 (n=345) |

*P≤0.05 **P≤0.01 ***P≤0.001

Data is from 2001 United States Congregational Life Surveys

Another potential weakness of just testing with standard deviation is the relationship between the standard deviation of a variable and its mean. In order to account for this, the aggregate mean within a congregation is used as a control variable, for each of the four independent variables. Thus, we can distinguish whether religious exclusivity itself rather than a diversity of views on religious exclusivity influence growth of congregations. There is also the statistical effect, however, that because there

is a ceiling on possible responses (i.e. with responses from 1 to 5, the mean can never be lower than 1 or higher than 5), standard deviations will necessarily be lower if the means are near the upper or lower limits. To account for this a control variable was made that controls for whether the mean is within half of a unit of these upper or lower limits. This dummy variable is termed “ceiling.” For example, on a variable ranging from 1 to 6 the ceiling is a mean below 1.5 or above 5.5.

Another control variable that has previously been shown to be related to the independent variables of interest is strictness. Strictness, in the form of restrictions on behavior, is a key element in many theories that explain which congregations are most successful. As Iannaccone (1994) lays out the argument, groups which place higher demands on membership are able to keep out free-riders and in turn provide a better experience for those who are members. In addition, strictness of an organization has been shown to be a significant predictor of attitudes toward other religions (see chapter 3). This is measured as a count of nine possible prohibitions that a congregation can have including smoking, alcohol, dancing, dress, cohabitation, tithing, homosexual behavior, food, and gambling.

Table 22 demonstrates one set of sample tables for the full model with no cases excluded and aggregate attendance as the independent variable of interest. Similar models were run with each of the four independent variables as well as each possible combination of control variables. In addition, models were analyzed that excluded Catholic parishes from the sample. In the full set of models for attendance, the independent variable is never statistically significant in predicting growth or overall size of the congregation. In fact, the only significant variable is Catholic in predicting

overall size, due to the aforementioned fact that Catholic parishes tend to be much larger than Protestant congregations in the United States. This trend of nonsignificance is very robust across all the independent and dependent variables of interest.

Table 22
Sample Results for Full Model with the Standard Deviation of Aggregate Attendance as the Independent Variable of Interest. OLS Models with Standardized Betas Reported.

| Independent Variables | Percent Attendance Change from 2000 to 2001 | Percent Attendance Change from 1996 to 2001 | Logarithmic Transformation of Overall Attendance |
|--|---|---|--|
| RELTRAD ^A | | | |
| Roman Catholic | 0.033 | 0.059 | 0.689** |
| Evangelical Protestant | 0.107 | 0.129 | 0.145 |
| Mainline Protestant | 0.002 | 0.110 | 0.115 |
| Black Protestant | 0.020 | 0.034 | 0.099 |
| Jewish | 0.006 | 0.027 | 0.044 |
| Strictness Scale | -0.029 | -0.009 | 0.031 |
| <i>Aggregate Attendance Standard Deviation</i> | <i>0.154</i> | <i>-0.112</i> | <i>-0.252</i> |
| Attendance Standard Deviation Squared | -0.123 | 0.040 | 0.237 |
| Attendance Mean | 0.121 | -0.054 | -0.029 |
| r-squared | 0.022 | 0.008 | 0.333 |
| Number of Cases | 344 | 306 | 349 |

^AReference category is Other religion.

*P<0.05

**P<0.01

Data is from 2001 United States Congregational Life Surveys

Table 23 gives a summary of the 576 models that were run. Of these, only in 8 cases was the independent variable of interest (the aggregate standard deviation) statistically significant. Table 24 summarizes these 8 models. In all 8 cases the dependent variable was the logarithmic transformation of the overall attendance. In

none of the 384 models that attempted to predict growth, either over a year or five years, was the standard deviation variable statistically significant.

Table 23
Summary of Variables in Each Model (576 Models in Total)

| | | |
|--|----------------------------------|--|
| One of the 3 Dependent Variable of Interest: | | |
| 1. Log of Attendance | 2. Growth 2000 to 2001 | 3. Growth 1996 to 2001 |
| One of the 4 Independent Variables of Interest: | | |
| 1. Standard Deviation of View of the Bible Attendance | 2. Standard Deviation of | |
| 3. Standard Deviation of Religious Exclusivity Religiosity | 4. Standard Deviation of Private | |
| Controlling for all combinations of these variables (24 Possibilities): | | |
| 1. Religious Prohibition Scale | | |
| 2. Religious Traditions (Catholic, Mainline, Evangelical, Black Protestant, Jewish, Other) | | |
| 3. Independent Variable of Interest Squared | | |
| 4. Mean of Independent Variable | OR | Ceiling Recode of Independent Variable |
| 5. No Controls | | |
| Exclusionary Variable (2 Possibilities): | | |
| 1. Catholics | | |
| 2. None | | |

Table 24 shows the 8 significant models. Private religiosity was statistically significant once. Because there were 48 different models that tested whether private religiosity was associated with overall size of congregations this is strong evidence that the one significant finding is a type 1 error. The other seven significant models all have view of the Bible as the independent variable. While this is not a robust finding, only occurring in seven of the 48 models testing whether biblical literalism is associated with overall attendance, it does suggest that there may be an association. All of the

significant models show a negative relationship, meaning that congregations with more similar beliefs about the bible tend to be larger than congregations with more diverse views. Although this fits with the theory that religious organizations need to have shared beliefs to thrive, such a finding is not supported by the other models that were tested.

Table 24
Models in which Standard Deviation was Significant at p -value < 0.05
(Dependent Variable is Log of Attendance for All of the Models)

| |
|--|
| 1. Private religiosity controlling for Reltrad and mean of private religiosity |
| 2. View of the Bible controlling for Reltrad and mean of view of the Bible |
| 3. View of the Bible controlling for mean of view of the Bible |
| 4. View of the Bible controlling for nothing |
| 5. View of the Bible controlling for ceiling of view of the Bible |
| 6. View of the Bible controlling for Reltrad and excluding Catholics |
| 7. View of the Bible controlling for prohibitions and excluding Catholics |
| 8. View of the Bible controlling for nothing and excluding Catholics |

Overall, it appears that similarity of beliefs and religious behavior is not associated with either growth or decline among American congregations. This is the case across a wide variety of religious traditions and when controlling for the overall strictness of the congregation. In addition, the lack of an association does not appear to be a statistical artifact of the shrinking standard deviations as the mean response of the congregants approaches the boundaries of a question. Finally, there is also not a relationship if we allow a potential association to be nonlinear, suggesting that there is not an optimal level of diversity of beliefs and/or behaviors. Even when all of these situations are tested in tandem none of the standard deviations is capable of predicting which congregations grew in either the past year or the past five years.

Conclusion

Findings indicate that none of the behavior or belief variables effects the overall growth of American congregations. In particular, the level of variation that exists among fellow congregants on views of the bible, attitudes toward other religions, frequency of attendance, and private religiosity are not associated with whether a congregation grew over the past year or 5 years. In addition, only views of the bible appear to be associated with the overall size of congregations.

This implies that contrary to common perceptions and the homogenous unit principle, religious organizations with more homogeneous members are not more successful, at least in regards to behavior and belief. In fact, a wide range of similarity or dissimilarity appears possible within congregations that are stable, growing or shrinking. This lack of an effect persists if we control for specific religious traditions, exclude Catholic parishes, control for the mean, allow a curvilinear relationship, or account for strictness. Returning to the three competing hypotheses proposed at the beginning of this paper it appears that all three fail to be accepted. Instead it appears that diversity of belief and behavior is in no way associated with the growth or overall size of congregations in the United States.

One important distinction to draw is the level of agency organizations have in achieving certain levels of diversity. For example, while the theory of institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) suggests that groups may have similar levels of diversity in an effort to mimic the most successful groups, this may not be within the control of individual congregations. Indeed, because the homogeneity of a congregation is an aggregate effect of many individual members, while church or

denomination leaders may be able to exert some control, it is largely a side-effect of the types of members that join and stay.

One potential weakness of this study is the inherent selection bias. By virtue of looking at religious congregations which are in existence we necessarily exclude those that failed. For example, at the extremes of doctrinal heterogeneity we would expect a church containing both Pentecostal and Satanist practitioners to do very poorly, and never even occur, let alone survive long enough to be in this type of survey. At the same time, it may be that religious organizations with no diversity of belief fail too quickly to show up. Even with this caveat the findings of this study seem to imply something very important about the nature of established congregations in the United States. Among these congregations it is possible to grow (or shrink) regardless of the level of diversity or similarity of beliefs among members, at least within a certain range.

A possible explanation of why these findings differ from previous analyses is the unit of analysis. Other studies (i.e. Scheitle 2007) have looked at denominations as a whole, thus treating the entire country as a single marketplace. Accordingly, what Roozen and Hadaway (1993) term “new congregational development”, the creation of new congregations could lead to more overall members within the denomination, without affecting the size of individual congregations. In other words, Evangelical Protestant denominations may be more capable of creating new churches than Mainline Protestants even if they have no differences in the growth rates once they are created.

A related difficulty arises in what Hannan and Freeman (1986) describe as the difference between “organizational level analysis” and “selection analysis.” By using individual organizations as the unit of analysis many studies, including this one, are

unable to capture the effects of the overall population composition on behaviors like deaths and mergers of organizations. Unfortunately, with the current dataset it is impossible to measure the entire population of religious organizations or even all the ones in the same marketplace as those in this study. It may in fact be the case that context determines what level of diversity is successful. Even if this is the case, however, the current study demonstrates that a wide range of levels of heterogeneity or homogeneity can survive and thrive in the United States.

Postscript

Most of the findings (or lack thereof) in this study may be an effect of examining a religious marketplace that is already established, and to some extent stabilized. Each congregation may have already established its niche in which it can have an appropriate level of diversity. This would not be the case if we looked at the introduction of a new religion. An extreme example is Buddhism in America, where over half (52.4%) of all organizations have services in more than one language and some (14.3%) practice more than one form of Buddhism (Smith 2007). This would be the equivalent of Catholics and Protestants sharing a place of worship. In this case it is a side effect of the religion being relatively small, and practitioners being willing to share services, since otherwise no organization would be possible. In addition, this may show that Christian organizations tend to demand a higher level of exclusivity of beliefs, even if there is some room for variation.

Fortunately, a preliminary test of whether American Buddhism would show different associations in regards to homogeneity of belief is possible. A 2005 mail survey of 231 American Buddhist organizations asked for both the languages and

schools of practice that the organization used in services.⁷ By practicing more than one school of Buddhism, a center is clearly allowing and even promoting a variety of beliefs, while multiple languages shows members coming from separate social spaces. Overall membership size is used as a measure of the vitality of the organization.⁸ As Table 25 shows neither of these variables either individually or in combination is statistically significantly associated with the overall size of the center. Just as with Christian congregations in the United States it appears that Buddhist organizations can find success in narrow belief niches or ones with more variety.

Table 25
Ordinary Least Squares Regressions of Overall Active Adult Members at American Buddhist Organizations, Parameter Estimates Reported

| Independent Variables | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|
| Number of Schools of Buddhism Practiced | 66.5 | | 59.0 |
| Number of Languages for Services | | 67.0 | 45.9 |
| r-square | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.002 |
| Number of Cases | 219 | 219 | 219 |

Data is from 2005 National Survey of Buddhist Organizations

⁷ For further information about this survey see Smith (2007).

⁸ Unfortunately, membership size was only asked for one year so it is not possible to determine growth.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

National Survey of Buddhist Organizations

National Survey of Buddhist Organizations

Instructions:

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. If you do not know the answer to a question, or it makes you uncomfortable, please leave it blank and skip to the next one. If you prefer to remain anonymous you may skip questions 1 and/or 2. Any information you can provide will be useful.

1. What is the name of your center? _____
2. Please provide the city and state in which your center is located: _____
3. What type of Buddhism does your center practice? (Check all that apply)

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ch'an | <input type="checkbox"/> Falun Gong | <input type="checkbox"/> Hua Yen | <input type="checkbox"/> Mahayana | <input type="checkbox"/> Nichiren Shoshu |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pure Land | <input type="checkbox"/> Rinzai Zen | <input type="checkbox"/> Shingon | <input type="checkbox"/> Soka Gakkai | <input type="checkbox"/> Soto Zen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tantric | <input type="checkbox"/> Tendai | <input type="checkbox"/> Theravada | <input type="checkbox"/> T'ien T'ai | <input type="checkbox"/> Vajrayana |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yogacara | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Specify) _____ | | | |
4. What is the primary country of origin of your members? (Check all that apply)

| | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bhutan | <input type="checkbox"/> Cambodia | <input type="checkbox"/> China | <input type="checkbox"/> India | <input type="checkbox"/> Japan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Laos | <input type="checkbox"/> Macau | <input type="checkbox"/> Mongolia | <input type="checkbox"/> Myanmar | <input type="checkbox"/> Nepal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> South Korea | <input type="checkbox"/> Sri Lanka | <input type="checkbox"/> Taiwan | <input type="checkbox"/> Tibet | <input type="checkbox"/> Thailand |
| <input type="checkbox"/> United States | <input type="checkbox"/> Vietnam | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Specify) _____ | | |
5. What language(s) are your services held in? (Check all that apply)

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Burmese | <input type="checkbox"/> Cambodian | <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese | <input type="checkbox"/> Dzongkha | <input type="checkbox"/> English |
| <input type="checkbox"/> French | <input type="checkbox"/> Hindi | <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese | <input type="checkbox"/> Korean | <input type="checkbox"/> Lao |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mongolian | <input type="checkbox"/> Nepalese | <input type="checkbox"/> Portuguese | <input type="checkbox"/> Russian | <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taiwanese | <input type="checkbox"/> Thai | <input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese | <input type="checkbox"/> Other | _____ |
6. Approximately how many active adult members does your center have? _____
7. What is the average age of your adult members, by your best estimate? _____ years
8. What percentage of your members are married, by your best estimate? _____ %

9. What types of services does your center provide?(Check all that apply)
- ☐ Study Groups
 - ☐ Mailings / Newsletters
 - ☐ Meditation Sessions
 - ☐ Religious Services
 - ☐ Monastery
 - ☐ Classes
 - ☐ Retreats
 - ☐ Other (Please Specify): _____
10. What types of outreach does your center have?(Check all that apply)
- ☐ Advertisements/classifieds in Buddhist literature
 - ☐ Advertisements/classifieds in non-Buddhist literature
 - ☐ Flyers
 - ☐ Booths at festivals and other public events
 - ☐ Listings in Yellow Pages/telephone directories
 - ☐ Festivals/events held at the center
 - ☐ Current members invite friends and family to visit
 - ☐ Volunteer work in the community
 - ☐ Other (Please Specify): _____
11. Is your center actively seeking new members?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No
12. If you would like a copy of the final report, please provide an address below:
- Mail final report to: _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
13. Would you be willing to participate in further surveys or follow up telephone interviews?
- ☐ Yes Phone Number (optional): _____ ☐ No

APPENDIX B

National Survey of Buddhist Adherents

THE VALUES AND BELIEFS OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC — A NATIONAL STUDY —

INSTRUCTIONS:

Please complete the survey to the best of your abilities. If you do not know the answer to a question, or it makes you uncomfortable, leave it blank and go to the next one. Any information you can provide will be useful.

I. RELIGIOUS BEHAVIORS AND ATTITUDES

1) With which religious families do you most closely identify? (Please mark all that apply.)

- ☐ Adventist
- ☐ African Methodist
- ☐ Anabaptist
- ☐ Assemblies of God
- ☐ Baha'i
- ☐ Baptist
- ☐ Bible Church
- ☐ Brethren
- ☐ Buddhist
- ☐ Catholic/Roman Catholic
- ☐ Chinese Folk Religion
- ☐ Christian & Missionary Alliance
- ☐ Christian Reformed
- ☐ Christian Science
- ☐ Church of Christ
- ☐ Church of God
- ☐ Church of the Nazarene
- ☐ Congregational
- ☐ Disciples of Christ
- ☐ Episcopal/Anglican
- ☐ Hindu
- ☐ Holiness
- ☐ Jehovah's Witnesses
- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ Latter-day Saints
- ☐ Lutheran
- ☐ Mennonite
- ☐ Methodist
- ☐ Muslim
- ☐ Orthodox (Eastern, Russian, Greek)
- ☐ Pentecostal
- ☐ Presbyterian
- ☐ Quaker/Friends
- ☐ Reformed Church of America/Dutch Reformed
- ☐ Salvation Army
- ☐ Seventh-day Adventist
- ☐ Unitarian Universalist
- ☐ United Church of Christ
- ☐ Non-denominational Christian
- ☐ No religion
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____
- ☐ Don't know

1a) With which type of Buddhism do you most closely identify? (Please mark all that apply.)

- ☐ Mahayana
- ☐ Theravada
- ☐ Vajrayana
- ☐ Ch'an
- ☐ Hua Yen
- ☐ Jodo Shinshu
- ☐ Nichiren Shoshu
- ☐ Nichiren Shu
- ☐ Pure Land
- ☐ Rinzai Zen
- ☐ Shingon
- ☐ Soka Gakkai
- ☐ Son
- ☐ Soto Zen
- ☐ Tantric
- ☐ Tendai
- ☐ Vipassana
- ☐ Yogacara
- ☐ Other: _____

2) Do the following terms describe your religious identity?

| | Yes | No |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Born-Again | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Bible-Believing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Charismatic | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Theologically Conservative | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Evangelical | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Fundamentalist | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. Theologically Liberal | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. Mainline Christian | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i. Pentecostal | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| j. Seeker | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| k. Religious Right | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| l. Moral Majority | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3) Please indicate the one term that best describes your religious identity. (Please mark only one box.)

- ☐ Born-Again
- ☐ Bible-Believing
- ☐ Charismatic
- ☐ Theologically Conservative
- ☐ Evangelical
- ☐ Fundamentalist
- ☐ Theologically Liberal
- ☐ Mainline Christian
- ☐ Pentecostal
- ☐ Seeker
- ☐ Religious Right
- ☐ Moral Majority
- ☐ None of these

4) How often do you attend religious services?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Less than once a year
- ☐ Once or twice a year
- ☐ Several times a year
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ 2-3 times a month
- ☐ About weekly
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Several times a week

5) How long have you attended your current place of worship?

- ☐ One year or less
- ☐ 2-4 years
- ☐ 5-9 years
- ☐ 10-19 years
- ☐ 20 or more years

6) On average, how many people attend services at your current place of worship?

Just your best estimate will do.

- ☐ Less than 100
- ☐ 100-299
- ☐ 300-799
- ☐ 800 or more

7) About what percent of the people at your current place of worship are of the same race/ethnicity as you? _____%

8) During the last year, approximately how much money did you and other family members in your household contribute to your current place of worship?

- ☐ Under \$500
- ☐ \$500 - \$999
- ☐ \$1,000 - \$1,999
- ☐ \$2,000 - \$2,999
- ☐ \$3,000 - \$3,999
- ☐ \$4,000 - \$4,999
- ☐ \$5,000 - \$5,999
- ☐ \$6,000 - \$6,999
- ☐ \$7,000 - \$7,999
- ☐ \$8,000 - \$8,999
- ☐ \$9,000 - \$9,999
- ☐ \$10,000 or more

9) Outside of attending religious services, about how often do you read Sutras, the Bible, Koran, Torah, or other sacred book?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Less than once a year
- ☐ Once or twice a year
- ☐ Several times a year
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ 2-3 times a month
- ☐ About weekly
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Several times a week or more often

10) About how often do you pray or meditate outside of religious services?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Only on certain occasions
- ☐ Once a week or less
- ☐ A few times a week
- ☐ Once a day
- ☐ Several times a day

11) When you pray, to whom do you pray?

(Please mark only one box.)

- ☐ I pray to Amida Buddha
- ☐ I pray to God
- ☐ I pray to Jesus Christ
- ☐ I sometimes pray to God, sometimes to Jesus
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

12) How often, if at all, do you participate in table prayers or grace before or after meals?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Only on certain occasions
- ☐ At least once a week
- ☐ At least once a day
- ☐ At all meals

14) How many of your friends...

| | All | Most | About half | A few | None | Don't know |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. go to your place of worship? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. go to a different place of worship? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. are not religious at all? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

15) How often did you participate in the following religious activities last month?

| | Not at all | 1-2 times | 3-4 times | 5 or more times |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Religious education programs..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Choir practice or other musical programs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Place of worship-sponsored counseling programs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Community or missionary outreach programs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Place of worship upkeep and maintenance | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Prayer meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. Committee or administrative work at your place of worship | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. Small group or Discipleship | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i. Witnessing/sharing your faith with friends | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| j. Witnessing/sharing your faith with strangers | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

16) Which one statement comes closest to your personal beliefs about the Bible? (Only mark one box)

- ☐ The Bible means exactly what it says. It should be taken literally, word-for-word, on all subjects.
- ☐ The Bible is perfectly true, but it should not be taken literally, word-for-word. We must interpret its meaning.
- ☐ The Bible contains some human error.
- ☐ The Bible is an ancient book of history and legends.
- ☐ I don't know

17) Which one statement comes closest to your personal beliefs about God? (Only mark one box)

- ☐ I have no doubts that God exists
- ☐ I believe in God, but with some doubts
- ☐ I sometimes believe in God
- ☐ I believe in a higher power or cosmic force
- ☐ I don't believe in anything beyond the physical world
- ☐ I have no opinion

18) Which one statement comes closest to your personal beliefs about Jesus? (Only mark one box)

- ☐ Jesus is a fictional character
- ☐ Jesus probably existed, but he was not special
- ☐ Jesus was an extraordinary person, but he was not a messenger of God
- ☐ Jesus was one of many messengers or prophets of God
- ☐ Jesus is the son of God
- ☐ I have no opinion

19) Which one statement comes closest to your personal view of religious salvation? (Only mark one box)

- ☐ My religion is the one, true faith that leads to salvation
- ☐ Many religions lead to salvation
- ☐ I do not believe in religious salvation
- ☐ I don't know

20) In your opinion, does each of the following exist?

| | Absolutely | Probably | Probably not | Absolutely not |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. God | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Satan | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Heaven | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Hell | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Purgatory | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Angels | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. Demons | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. Armageddon | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i. The Rapture | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| j. Ghosts | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

21) Please indicate whether or not you have ever had any of the following experiences:

| | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. I witnessed or experienced a miraculous, physical healing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. I witnessed people speaking in tongues at a place of worship | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. I spoke in tongues at a place of worship | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. I personally had a vision of a religious figure while awake | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. I felt called by God to do something | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. I heard the voice of God speaking to me | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. I had a dream of religious significance | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. I changed profoundly as the result of a religious experience | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i. I had a religious conversion experience | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

22) Have you ever had an experience where you felt that...

| | Yes | No |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. you were filled with the spirit? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. you were one with the universe? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. you left your body for a period of time? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. you were in a state of religious ecstasy? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

23) How comfortable would you feel talking about religion with.....

| | Very comfortable | Somewhat comfortable | Somewhat uncomfortable | Not at all comfortable |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. your neighbors? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. your coworkers (if applicable)? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. your friends? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. your family? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. strangers? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

24) Please indicate the religious affiliation of your father, mother, and spouse (if married).

(Please mark one box for each column)

| | Father | Mother | Spouse |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Buddhist..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Protestant (Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Roman Catholic | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Jewish | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Orthodox | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Muslim | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not religious | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

25) How personally religious were you at age 12?

- ☐ Not religious at all
☐ Not very religious
☐ Somewhat religious
☐ Very religious

26) By your best estimate, how often did you attend religious services at age 12?

- ☐ Never
☐ Less than once a year
☐ Once or twice a year
☐ Several times a year
☐ Once a month
☐ 2-3 times a month
☐ About weekly
☐ Weekly
☐ Several times a week

II. MORAL ATTITUDES

27) How do you feel about abortion in the following circumstances?

- | | Always
wrong | Almost
always
wrong | Only
wrong
sometimes | Not
wrong
at all |
|--|--------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. The baby may have a serious defect | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. The woman's health is in danger | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. The pregnancy is the result of rape | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. The family cannot afford the child | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. The woman does not want the child | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

28) How do you feel about sexual relations in the following circumstances?

- | | Always
wrong | Almost
always
wrong | Only
wrong
sometimes | Not
wrong
at all |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. Before marriage | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Between two adults of the same sex | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. With someone other than the marriage partner | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

29) How do you feel about the following marriage and family related issues?

- | | Always
wrong | Almost
always
wrong | Only
wrong
sometimes | Not
wrong
at all |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. Divorce | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Living with a partner before marriage | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Having a planned pregnancy outside of marriage | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. The adoption of a child by a gay couple | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Adopting a child of a different race | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Gay marriage | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

30) How do you feel about the following?

- | | Always
wrong | Almost
always
wrong | Only
wrong
sometimes | Not
wrong
at all |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. The consumption of alcohol | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. The viewing of pornography | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. The use of marijuana | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Physician-assisted suicide | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Embryonic stem cell research | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. War | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

III. POLITICAL ATTITUDES

31) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the war in Iraq and the Middle East:

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Undecided |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. The United States was justified in entering Iraq | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Saddam Hussein was somehow involved in the 9/11 attacks .. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. The U.S. must establish democratic order in the Middle East .. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

32) To what extent do you agree or disagree that the federal government should:

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Undecided |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Abolish the death penalty | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Spend more on the military | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Distribute wealth more evenly | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Advocate Christian values | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Defend Christian values | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Regulate business practices more closely..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. Do more to protect the environment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. Expand its authority to fight terrorism | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i. Punish criminals more harshly | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| j. Promote affirmative action programs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| k. Fund faith-based organizations | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| l. Allow the display of religious symbols in public spaces | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| m. Allow prayer in public schools | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

33) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the educational system and the media:

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Undecided |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. A racist should be allowed to teach at a high school | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. An atheist should be allowed to teach at a high school .. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. An admitted homosexual should be allowed to teach at a high school | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. A Muslim should be allowed to teach at a high school ... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. The typical college professor is out of touch with my values | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. The mainstream media is out of touch with my values | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

34) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Undecided |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. God favors the United States in worldly affairs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. God favors one political party in the United States | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

35) How important is it to do the following in order to be a good person?

| | Very Important | Somewhat important | Not very important | Not at all important |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Actively seek social and economic justice | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Take care of the sick and needy | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Teach others your morals | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Convert others to your religious faith | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Serve in the military | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Consume or use fewer goods | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

IV. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND TRUST

36) In the year leading up to the 2004 presidential election, did you...

| | Yes | No |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. read newspaper or magazine stories about the election? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. visit Internet sites related to the election? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. give money to a political campaign, party, or candidate? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. write, call, or visit a public official? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. attend a political rally or meeting? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. attend a class or lecture about social or political issues? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. participate in a public protest or demonstration? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. work for a political campaign or voter registration drive? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i. watch or listen to a political debate? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

37) Of the final candidates, who did you want to win the 2004 presidential election?

- ☐ George W. Bush
☐ John Kerry
☐ Ralph Nader
☐ Somebody else
☐ No preference

38) Did you vote in the 2004 presidential election?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

39) How would you describe yourself politically?

- ☐ Strong Republican
☐ Moderate Republican
☐ Leaning Republican
☐ Independent
☐ Leaning Democrat
☐ Moderate Democrat
☐ Strong Democrat
☐ Other (*please specify*)

40) In the past year, has anyone asked you to volunteer your time?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

41) On average, about how many hours per month do you volunteer...

| | None | 1-2 hours | 3-4 hours | 5-10 hours | 11 or more hours |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. for the community, through your place of worship? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. for the community, not through your place of worship? .. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. for your place of worship? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

42) Please indicate your current level of involvement with the following organizations:

(Mark all that apply for each item a-o)

| | I belong | I contribute | I volunteer | I hold leadership position |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| a. Arts or cultural organization | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. An elementary, middle, or high school | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Charitable organization or group | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Church or other religious organization | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Civic or service group | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Ethnic or racial organization | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. Internet-based club, group, or chat-room | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. Neighborhood group or association | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i. Political party, club, or association | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| j. School fraternities, sororities, or alumni association | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| k. Sports, hobby, or leisure club/group | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| l. Therapeutic or counseling group | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| m. Trade union or professional association | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| n. Youth groups or organizations | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| o. Other group/organization | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

43) How much would you say that you trust the following people or groups?

| | A lot | Some | Only a little | Not at all |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. People in general | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Your neighbors | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Your coworkers | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Strangers | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. The United Nations | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. The U.S. government | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. George W. Bush | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. John Kerry | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i. The media | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| j. The police | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| k. Immigrants | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| l. People of other races | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| m. People who don't believe in God | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| n. Protestants | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| o. Catholics | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| p. Mormons | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| q. Muslims | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

V. DEMOGRAPHICS

44) What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
☐ Female

45) What is your date of birth?

__ / __ / __ __
m m d d y y y

46) Are you a citizen of the United States of America?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

47) Are you Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

48) How many children do you have?

--

49) How many children under the age of 18 currently live in your household?

--

50) What is your race? (You can mark "yes" to more than one.)

| | Yes | No |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. White | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Black or African-American | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. American Indian or Alaska Native ... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Some other race (<i>please specify</i>) ... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

51) What is your current marital status?

- ☐ Never married
☐ Married
☐ Living as married
☐ Separated
☐ Divorced
☐ Widowed

52) What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Please mark only one box.)

- ☐ 8th grade or less
☐ 9th -12th grade (no high school diploma)
☐ High school graduate (12)
☐ Some college
☐ Trade/Technical/Vocational training
☐ College graduate
☐ Postgraduate work/Degree

53) By your best estimate, what was your total household income last year, before taxes?

- ☐ \$10,000 or less
- ☐ \$10,001 - \$20,000
- ☐ \$20,001 - \$35,000
- ☐ \$35,001 - \$50,000
- ☐ \$50,001 - \$100,000
- ☐ \$100,001 - \$150,000
- ☐ \$150,001 or more

54) Last week did you do any work for pay or profit?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

56) If you are employed, which of the following best describes your employment?

- ☐ Employed by a for-profit private company, business or individual
- ☐ Employed by a non-profit, tax-exempt or charitable organization
- ☐ Employed by the local, state or federal government
- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Working without pay in a family business or farm
- ☐ Not currently employed

57) If you are currently employed, what is your job title?

58) Is your current employer a locally-owned business?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I'm not sure

59) If you did not do any work last week for pay or profit, what is the reason?

- ☐ I am a homemaker
- ☐ I am a student
- ☐ I am retired
- ☐ I have a disability or injury
- ☐ I am looking for work
- ☐ I was on vacation or leave

55) How many hours did you work last week?

--

VI. CONSUMPTION OF RELIGIOUS GOODS

60) When you read books about religion, from which source are you most likely to get them?
(Please mark only one box.)

- ☐ I don't read books about religion
☐ The public library
☐ A library at my place of worship
☐ A Christian bookstore
☐ A New Age/metaphysical bookstore
☐ A general bookstore, such as Barnes & Noble® or Waldenbooks®
☐ An online retailer, such as Amazon.com®
☐ I borrow from a friend/family member
☐ Other (please specify) _____

| 61) How many times in the past year did you... | Never | 1-3 times | 4-6 times | 7-11 times | 12+ |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. visit a general bookstore? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. visit a Christian bookstore? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. visit a New Age/metaphysical bookstore? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. purchase something from a general bookstore? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. purchase something from a Christian bookstore? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. purchase something from a New Age/metaphysical bookstore? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

62) Have you ever chosen to use a service or business (other than a religious store), because the owner is a member of your religion?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I don't know

63) Religiously-themed items come in many forms, from jewelry, such as crucifixes or crystals, to books, such as the *Left-Behind* series or the *Lotus Sutra*.

| If you purchased any of the following religiously-themed items in the past year, please indicate where you purchased the item. (Please mark all that apply for each item a-m.) | I purchased this item from (mark all that apply): | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Online merchant | Religious store | Non-religious store | My place of worship |
| a. Religious jewelry, such as crucifixes or prayer beads | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Religious fiction books, such as the <i>Left Behind</i> series | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Religious non-fiction books, such as the <i>Purpose-Driven Life</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Devotional books, such as books of prayers | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. The Bible, Sutras, or other sacred books | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Music by religious artists or bands | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. Religious art or pictures, such as statues of Buddha or portraits of Jesus..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. Movies with a religious theme or perspective, such as <i>The Passion of the Christ</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i. Religious education products for children | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| j. Bible-study or small group materials | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| k. Clothing or t-shirts with religious messages | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| l. Bumper stickers/car decals with religious messages or symbols | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| m. Greeting cards with religious messages or symbols | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

64) In the past month, about how much money do you think you spent on religious products (such as items in Question 63), including items purchased from your place of worship?

- ☐ None
☐ Less than \$25
☐ \$25-\$49
☐ \$50-\$99
☐ \$100-\$999
☐ \$1,000 or more

65) Have you seen any of the following movies/television shows?

Yes

No

- a. *The Passion of the Christ* ☐
 b. *This Is Your Day* with Benny Hinn ☐
 c. *Joan of Arcadia* ☐
 d. Any VeggieTales movies or videos ☐
 e. *7th Heaven* ☐
 f. *Touched by an Angel* ☐

66) Have you read any of the following books?

Yes

No

- a. Any book in the *Left Behind* series ☐
 b. *The Celestine Prophecy* by James Redfield ☐
 c. Any book about *Dianetics* ☐
 d. *God's Politics* by Jim Wallis ☐
 e. *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown ☐
 f. *The Purpose-Driven Life* by Rick Warren ☐
 g. Any book by James Dobson (Focus on the Family) ☐

VII. THE NEW AGE

67) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Undecided

- | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. We are approaching an entirely new age that will radically change our view of science, spiritual knowledge, or humanity..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Ancient advanced civilizations, such as Atlantis, once existed..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Some alternative treatments are at least as effective as traditional medicine..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. It is possible to influence the physical world through the mind alone... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Astrologers, palm-readers, tarot card readers, fortune tellers, and psychics can foresee the future..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Astrology impacts one's life and personality..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. It is possible to communicate with the dead..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. Places can be haunted..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i. Dreams sometimes foretell the future or reveal hidden truths..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| j. Some UFOs are probably spaceships from other worlds..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| k. Creatures such as Bigfoot and the Loch Ness Monster will one day be discovered by science.... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| 68) As an adult, have you ever done any of the following? | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Used acupuncture or other forms of non-traditional medicine | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Consulted a horoscope to get an idea about the course of your life | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Called or consulted a medium, fortune teller, or psychic | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Visited or lived in a house or place believed to be haunted | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Consulted a Ouija board to contact a deceased person or spirit | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Had a dream that later came true | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. Witnessed an object in the sky that you could not identify (UFO) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| 69) Have you ever read a book, consulted a Web site, or researched the following topics? | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Alternative medicine | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Specific techniques for spiritual development, such as yoga | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Mediums, fortune-tellers, or psychics | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. UFO sightings, abductions, or conspiracies | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Ghosts, apparitions, haunted houses, or electronic voice phenomena | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Mysterious animals, such as Bigfoot or the Loch Ness Monster | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. Astrology | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. The prophecies of Nostradamus | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i. The new age movement in general | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

70) Which of the statements below best summarizes your opinion of professional astrologers, psychics, palm readers, and other people who claim to foresee the future? (Please mark only one box.)

☐ At least some really have the power to foresee the future

☐ They may believe they can tell the future, but they are either mentally ill or deluded

☐ They know they cannot tell the future and are simply lying to get their client's money

☐ I have no opinion

This completes the survey. Please make sure you have answered all of the questions relevant to you and then return the survey to _____. Thank you for your participation!

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