

THESIS

THE GREEN PRACTICE:  
DEVELOPMENT OF A CULTURAL MODEL FOR CONTEMPORARY  
WESTERN BUDDHISM AT THE EYES OF COMPASSION SANGHA AND  
THEIR ENGAGEMENT WITH CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts

Colorado State University

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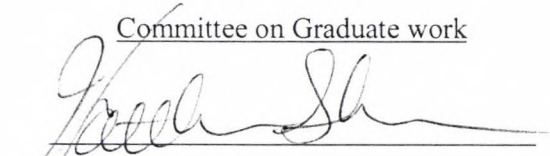
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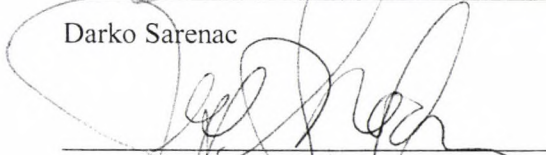
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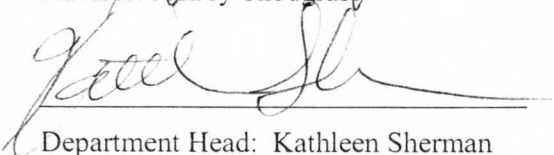
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Darko Sarenac



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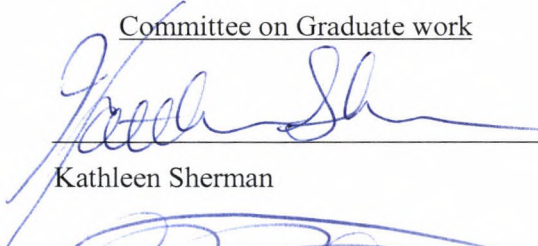
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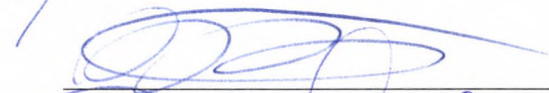
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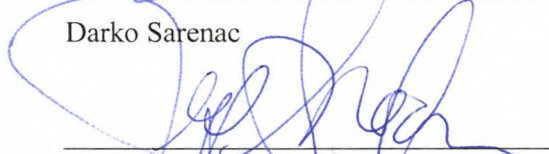
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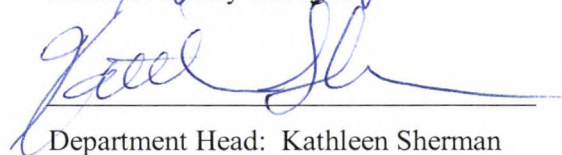
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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

### THE GREEN PRACTICE:

#### DEVELOPMENT OF A CULTURAL MODEL FOR CONTEMPORARY WESTERN BUDDHISM AT THE EYES OF COMPASSION SANGHA AND THEIR ENGAGEMENT WITH CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES

As Buddhism moves globally, many shifts in the practice are currently taking place. This thesis examines both historical anthropological concepts regarding Buddhist practices and societies, as well as contemporary analysis of the development of Buddhism in the United States and beyond.

Working with several Buddhist practitioners in Colorado, the question of how practitioners of Buddhism engage with the issue of climate change. Responses and contemporary research are fused to create a cognitive model of how contemporary Buddhists in a particular Sangha group might think about and engage with the issue. A picture on how these Buddhist practitioners engage with and enact their thoughts on issues of climate change derive from this cultural model, as well as from surveys, interviews, and participants observations.

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To the Eyes of Compassion Sangha, thank you for all your help. This paper would not have been possible without your support. Thank you also for the community of sangha, which has been a wonderful place for me to learn, relax, and build my practice.

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And to my friends and family along the way who've been there to help me get through school and support me emotionally, financially, or listen to me scream throughout the entire process!

## Section 1: Introduction

*"We are the same as plants, as trees, as other people, as the rain that falls. We consist of that which is around us; we are the same as everything." - Gotama Buddha (Sakyamuni)*

In the opening of his recent book *The World We Have*, influential Buddhist writer, thinker, and teacher Thich Nhat Hanh says, "All of us know that our beautiful green planet is in danger. Our way of walking on the Earth has a great influence on animals and plants. Yes, we act as if our daily lives have nothing to do with the conditions of the world... I have sat with the Buddha for a long time and consulted him about the issue of global warming, and the teaching of the Buddha is very clear. If we continue to live as we are living, consuming without a thought for the future, destroying our forests and emitting dangerous amounts of carbon dioxide, then devastating climate change is inevitable... We need a kind of collective awakening" (Nhat Hanh 2008: 2).

Buddhism in the West (particularly the United States) has seen a major, unprecedented growth in the last few decades. As practitioners and other interested parties join Buddhist oriented groups, take up meditation, or read and write books on the subject, a new sort of Buddhist thinking seems to be arising in the West. New teachers, some from Asian Buddhist traditions and others Westerners who have adopted the practice, are offering Buddhist teachings specifically geared for what they call the "Western mind." Within this newly forming strain of Buddhism in the United States today, the topic of climate change is often a prevalent one within Buddhist oriented discourse.

Today in the United States, Buddhism has taken a large place on the world stage for addressing climate change issues. "Buddhism and other world religions are being asked to come

forward with relevant teachings and take a stand against global ecological destruction," note writers and researchers Stephanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft (Kaza, Kraft 2000: 1). Buddhist leaders have indeed responded and made a stand, with major figures such as the Dalai Lama, Zen leader Robert Aitken, and the monk Thich Nhat Hanh have been vocal in their calls for attention to global warming, and writing books or giving speeches on Buddhist-oriented strategies for addressing the crisis. Groups such as the Green Gulch Zen Center in California, and the Buddhist Peace Fellowship have given prominence to climate change issues in their groups, encouraging direct action, peaceful protests, and other activist strategies for raising awareness of climate change.

All this activity, however, begs the question of how exactly the practitioners in Buddhist communities and sanghas (practitioner groups) throughout the United States are thinking about, and engaging with issues such as climate change. Is the way they examine the issue of climate change tied to their Buddhist practices, or is it merely a coincidental occurrence that many Buddhist practitioners in the United States are engaging in sometimes very highly visible ecological activities? What shapes this "new way of thinking" offered by and adopted by Buddhist practitioners? How is this thinking different from traditional Buddhist frameworks?

In developing a cultural model of how the practitioners of the Eyes of Compassion Sangha first conceptualize ideas about the environment and tracing how these "big picture" ideas influence further narrower ideas, and ultimately daily actions which group members take to address or engage with issues of climate change, these questions might find some answers. Stephanie Kaza, an associate professor of environmental studies at the University of Vermont and a Buddhist activist herself, notes that it is difficult to fully answer questions about the interaction between Buddhism and environmentalism in concrete ways, as Buddhism in America is still fairly new in many ways, and the particular strain of Engaged Buddhism is a markedly new phase



in tradition of Buddhism itself. While it may seem that the easy way to understand this would be to simply track the activities of the Buddhist practitioners who say they are interested in Buddhism; this, however, does not help us understand just how their Buddhist ideas impact their lifestyle choices. As Kaza notes, "lifestyle change is only part of the path to green living; we also need to spend some time *thinking* about our actions" (Kaza 2008). As participant observation, interviews, surveys, and other research was conducted within the Eyes of Compassion Sangha of Denver, Colorado (with minor contributing research conducted with other American Buddhist groups, such as the Shambhala Center of Fort Collins, Colorado), I developed a cultural model specific to this practice community, which will hopefully address not only how these practitioners act, but also how they think about these actions as they relate to climate change issues.

Utilizing cognitive schema models as developed by influential anthropological and philosophical thinkers (such as Roy D'Andrade, Claudia Strauss, Naomi Quinn, Holly Mathews, and Daniel N. McIntosh), a top-down model will be developed that will hopefully identify the "big picture" ideas these group members hold in relation to climate change that influence ethical precepts, lifestyle choices, and ultimately day-to-day activities that members undertake to address the ever-growing problem of global warming.

Developing this model will also assist in understanding the ways in which this form of Buddhism is, as Buddhist scholars examining Buddhism's movement in the West suggest, differing in key ways from Buddhist traditions in the past and in other countries. By examining case studies and anthropological writings on Buddhism in both the past and the present, and in Asian and America in the Literature Review session, it is hoped that the uniqueness of this cultural model can be identified as well.

With the growth of Buddhism and Buddhist-oriented environmental groups growing rapidly so recently in America, many of the questions of how practitioners utilize traditional and new Buddhist ideas (and what, indeed, these ideas might really be) are present for researchers examining Buddhism. By utilizing data generated within the Eyes of Compassion Mindfulness group in Denver, Colorado over the course of two years via participant observation, interviews, surveys, and examinations of group texts and narratives (as well as similar research conducted with the Shambhala group in Fort Collins, Colorado), I hope to develop a cultural cognitive schematic model that will hopefully help address all these important questions.

## **Section 2: Introduction to Buddhism, Past and Present**

As a world philosophical and religious tradition, Buddhism has a rich and thorough history, spanning centuries, countries, and continents, with many different traditions, schools, doctrines, and teachings. A nebulous and sometimes difficult tradition to encapsulate in a short overview, the origin stories, doctrines, and principles of the tradition vary between and even within the varied traditions of Buddhism found all over the world. Scholars of history and religion have offered many different interpretations of almost every aspect of Buddhism both historically and in the present. What follows is a brief (and admittedly, likely incomplete) synopsis of what is asserted by several sources as the history and basic teachings of the tradition broadly referred to as "Buddhism." This basic outline will hopefully provide context for the discussions of Buddhist concepts and the American Buddhist community investigated in depth within this paper.

### **The Origins of Buddhism**

According to the majority of sources recognized as authoritative today, the foundation of Buddhism originated in what is now the modern day region of Nepal in the year 563 B.C.E., with the historically acknowledged founder of the tradition, Siddhartha Gotama. While many legends and stories detail the life of Siddhartha and his founding of the Buddhist tradition, and vary within Buddhist traditions, although the basic structure of events tends to be similar in various tellings. Born into the royal family in Lumbini, traditional stories of the origins of Buddhism say that Siddhartha was born to the regional king (of the Sakya clan, and of the *Kshatriya* or "warrior" caste) Suddhodana and his wife, Queen Maya. After Maya died during Siddhartha's birth, his father was told by a holy man that his son would fulfill a prophesy to either become a great military leader or a great spiritual leader. Preferring the first option for his son, the king

attempted to shield his son from images of human suffering in an effort to restrain him from becoming a spiritual leader instead. Isolating his son in the palace, Siddhartha was surrounded by luxury and any images of misery, death, or suffering were intentionally kept from him by the king. At the age of 29, however, Siddhartha's curiosity about the world outside the walls of the palace became too intense to contain, and accompanied by a palace charioteer, he ventured outside his palatial home only to encounter the very things from which his father intended to shield him. During his ventures, Siddhartha encountered four sights: A poor man, a sick man, a man begging, and a dead man. These things filled him with a great sorrow and Siddhartha was "filled with infinite sorrow for the suffering that humanity has to undergo" (<http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/BUDDHISM/SIDD.HTM>). Returning to the palace, the luxuries that had once been pleasurable now seemed grotesque and not even the birth of his son (who he named Rahula, meaning "fetter") could not bring him joy as he realized that all those around him would eventually die and turn to dust. With these things weighing heavy upon him, Siddhartha renounced his princely life and abandoned his royal family (including his wife and son) and set out to discover the way to end human suffering and misery.

Shaving his head and trading his princely robes for those of a beggar, Siddhartha began seeking several teachers who offered direction in meditation and taught him of the different religious traditions, philosophies, and actions, but none satisfied him fully as a path to understanding of human suffering or its solution, and his doubts grew so strong that he left to pursue enlightenment apart from traditional teachings. Joined by five companions, Siddhartha and his associates embarked on a rigorous ascetic devotional existence that included fasting to near starvation, holding their breath, and enduring painful rituals. Siddhartha's dedication to the ascetic lifestyle became so extreme that he eventually grew painfully thin and weak. One day, he heard a teacher speaking of music. The teacher pointed out that "if the strings on the instrument are set too tight, then the instrument will not play harmoniously. If the strings are set too loose,

the instrument will not produce music. Only the middle way, not too tight and not too loose, will produce harmonious music" (<http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/BUDDHISM/SIDD.HTM>). This teaching impacted him deeply and altered his views and practices overnight. While previously he and his five companions had refused food as part of their ascetic devotions, Siddhartha was approached by a girl holding a bowl of milk. Recognizing that his body must be strong if he was to learn, Siddhartha accepted this bowl of milk and drank it, causing his companions to believe he had given up on his journey of learning, and they abandoned him.

Indeed, Siddhartha believed he had discovered something profound, and the acceptance of the bowl of milk signified his absorption of a new revelation. While he had denounced the extremes of hedonistic pleasures offered to him as a prince in the palace, he recognized that the opposite choice of self-mortification and pain he had taken up as an ascetic was yet another extreme that did not offer a solution to the questions of suffering and its cessation he sought. Entering into a period of intense yogic meditation beneath a sacred fig (or banyan) tree, many stories of this part of Siddhartha's life indicate he was attacked by the demon Mara (meaning "destruction"), who brought down an army of monsters to accost Siddhartha's stillness and meditation. (Some suggest that Mara and the monstrous army is a symbolic representation of the tumultuous state of Siddhartha's mind as he grappled with difficult concepts of suffering and peace). The demon Mara first dispatched his most beautiful daughter to tempt and seduce Siddhartha, but he remained still and unmoved. Next, Mara challenged Siddhartha to list his spiritual accomplishments, while the demon asserted that his were far greater than Siddhartha's, to which the monster army asserted by shouting "I am his witness!" Still sitting calmly, Siddhartha reached out one hand and touched the earth, at which the earth itself rumbled and announced "I bear his witness!" Mara disappeared after this, and Siddhartha sat until the morning star rose. As it peaked in the sky, Siddhartha became enlightened and became a Buddha (<http://buddhism.about.com/od/lifeofthebuddha/a/buddhalife.htm>).

Siddhartha, now a Buddha (the Historic Buddha, or Sakyamuni Buddha, as he is referenced by several traditions) at first was a reluctant teacher, fearing that his experience was incapable of being communicated through words alone, but eventually was moved by compassion to attempt to spread what he found as the path to overcoming suffering to the rest of humanity. Traveling, he encounter his five companions who had abandoned him after he took the milk in a bowl, and related to them his idea of the "Middle Path," which was preserved as the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutra, which outlined the basic foundations of what became Buddhism, the "Four Noble Truths." Advocating neither extreme hedonism nor asceticism, the Buddha rather prescribed a path of contemplative thinking and calm, direct actions that were directed by such contemplative thinking. This middle path of thoughtful action could lead each individual to personal enlightenment, and humanity to enlightenment and cessation of suffering in general.

Rejoined by his former companions who now served as his disciples, the Buddha traveled the regions of what is now India and Nepal, sharing his concepts. Eventually, he reconciled with his father, the King, as well as his wife and son. His wife and son became adherents to his new teachings, becoming a nun and monk. Joined by his son and other disciples, the Buddha traveled and taught until he reached the age of 80, at which he died after consuming accidentally contaminated meat offered to him by a devotee. Some texts suggest his last words were: "All component things in the world are changeable. They are not lasting. Work hard to gain your own salvation."

### **Development of Buddhist Canon, Tradition and Lineages.**

After the death of the Sakyamuni Buddha, his teachings continued to find traction with his sphere of followers and grew in several places around India and Nepal, with many different schools, sects, and traditions developing. Devotees traveled throughout Northern India as monks

who adopted the shaved head of the Sakyamuni Buddha as a physical marker of their devotion, carried "begging bowls" to which local community members would contribute, and attempted to live a simplistic life free from wealth and sensual indulgence.

It took hundreds of years for the teachings of the Buddha to be written, and originally they were transcribed into several different languages. Although the exact timeframe of the transcriptions is indeterminate, it is accepted that between the years 89 and 77 B.C.E., the writings were collected and transcribed in the Pali language, becoming the basis of what later was adopted as the definitive Buddhist canon (Hooker, 1996: <http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/BUDDHISM/THERA.HTM>). In the third century B.C.E., the Mauryan Emperor Asoka adopted Buddhism, and through his engagement of missionaries, spread the teachings to the Buddha throughout India and into places such as Sri Lanka and Thailand. During this time period, a council of monks was also convened to address incongruities in doctrinal Buddhism. This council solidified the adopted canon, which was "called the Tripitaka, or "Three Baskets," for it is divided into three parts, the *Vinaya*, or "Conduct," the *Sutta*, or "Discourses," and the *Abhidhamma*, or "Supplementary Doctrines." The second part, the "Discourses," is the most important in Buddhism. These are discourses by the Buddha and contain the whole of Buddhist philosophy and morality" (Hooker, 1996: <http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/BUDDHISM/THERA.HTM>). This council and the writings became the foundation of what became known as Theravada Buddhism, a tradition that still holds strong mainly in Sri Lanka, Laos, Burma, and Thailand, and remains largely adherent to the concepts adopted by the council of this era.

While Theravada traditions still exist in these countries and have seen a spread in the last few decades, particularly westward, a variety of other identifiable traditions and lineages developed and still exist in other areas where Buddhism has held sway for many years. After

traveling with traders and missionary monks from the Theravada areas, sectarian splits developed, with each emphasizing its own trainings and teachings, eventually spawning a reform group, tradition known as Mahayana. Mahayana ("the great vehicle") developed as Buddhism moved out from India, through the Theravada countries, and back into the Indian sub-continent, eventually making its way to China and beyond. Doctrines were added, philosophies expounded, and schools developed to engage and develop the Mahayana tradition. China also developed other schools of Buddhism, as did Japan (with Zen being perhaps the most recognizable today) as doctrines, teachings, and philosophies spread to these areas. As Buddhism spread back into India and from there into Tibet, another lineage was created as Buddhism blended with local animistic beliefs, resulting in what is now called Vajrayana ("Diamond" or colloquially "Tibetan") Buddhism (Mizuno 2003: 16-17).

### **Philosophy and Basic Principles of Buddhism**

While teachings and emphasis on different aspects of teachings vary by and within the different schools and traditions, an over-arching principle of "Buddhism" is necessary to define for the goals of this paper. While certainly not all details can be asserted as absolute or common to all schools of Buddhism, the following offers a synopsis of what might be considered some of the important foundations of Buddhism, at least in regards to the discussions in this paper.

A quick summation suggests that Buddhism could be considered a life-system around the concept of the teachings of the Sakyamuni Buddha. Tradition asserts that the Sakyamuni Buddha (Siddhartha) was not considered to be divine, nor is he considered to be currently alive, and consequently this Buddha "cannot help us achieve salvation" (Hamilton 71) nor can he guide current actions. While not seemingly as present in the Western forms of Buddhism encountered during this examination, many Eastern forms of Buddhism reference other Buddhas as central to their system, although the central focus of the majority of Buddhist systems is the Four Noble



Truths as laid down by the Sakyamuni Buddha in his teachings. These teachings are referred to as the dharma, or "the path." Like many traditions, the concept of what exactly is embodied in the *dharma* is debated and thoughts and theories on it have been offered throughout the ages, with different teachers, groups, and individual practitioners exploring definitions both formally and informally.

The Four Noble Truths form the crux of the Buddhist ideological system across all varieties of the practice. The First Truth, *dukkha* in the original language of the Buddhist writings, says that life entails suffering. As Hamilton points out, the terms "suffering" can be problematic in translation and the closest English definition may indeed be "the cumbersome "unsatisfactoriness." (Hamilton 71). The Second Truth follows the first, explaining that suffering is caused by desire, grasping, ego, and craving. The Third posits that suffering can be ended by extinguishing such cravings and desires, and the Fourth Truth offers a remedial path for overcoming these cravings, outlined in what is called "The Eightfold Path." The Eightfold Path recommends: right views, right aspiration, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right contemplation. "The first two 'steps' refer to the necessity of seeking salvation and acceptance of the dharma" (Hamilton 71). The next three form a basis of Buddhism ethics or morals, and dictate actions. These "steps" are further distilled and extrapolated in what is referred to as the Five Precepts, or in some Western iterations, the Five Mindfulness Trainings. The last three "steps" refer to meditative practices, states of thought, and the gaining of "wisdom" (for lack of a better term.) (Hamilton 71).

Concepts such as karma are also essential to the Buddhist canon, although the understanding of karma (generally considered inevitable consequences of intentional actions) appears to be shifting through traditions and nearly absent from some of the Western Buddhist discourse. In traditional forms of Eastern Buddhism, such as the Theravada tradition found in

places such as Burma and Thailand, ideas of rebirth and reincarnation are strongly emphasized in the concept of karma (as defined by Hamilton), with actions of the present dictating the quality and "level" of future re-births. In the Western concepts of Buddhism explored for this study, karma was a much more loosely defined as consequences of action; In the Eyes of Compassion sangha, for example, reincarnation was not often mentioned and indeed many of the texts geared towards Western Buddhists cautions against focusing on this aspect of traditional belief.

Yet another "numbered list" aspect of the Buddhist thought is the Three Jewels (or Three Refuges): These are reverence for the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. These are regarded as the three things to which a Buddhist will look towards, or "take refuge in" for guidance, instruction, and comfort. The Sangha, in many traditional interpretations, refers to the members of the Buddhist community to which one is a member. The term "sangha" is often applied to a particular meeting community (such as the Eyes of Compassion Sangha, which is the immediate sangha for regular practitioners there, however, it is part of the larger Colorado Community of Mindful Living, which in turn is part of the larger international community that tends to center around the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh.) Sangha is a malleable term, often referencing first the immediate community, the broader community of practitioners, and sometimes even all human and non-human beings of earth.

### **Buddhism in the Western World**

Some assert that Buddhism's foray into the West began in the 19th century, with some adopting it as a rational system, and others perceiving it with a heavy gloss of romanticism. While some early individuals adopted particular practices and Buddhist ideas in Europe particularly during the early 20th century, it was not until the middle of the century when Buddhism became a popular topic of discourse (helped in part by attention from famous American authors such as Jack Kerouac.) During this time and shortly after, a number of teachers

(such as Suzuki Roshi who brought Zen teachings to America, Chogyam Trungpa who founded the Shambhala Tradition, and Thich Nhat Hanh who established the Order of Interbeing) , from traditional Buddhist school and lineages brought Buddhist ideas, teachings, and concepts Westward. Since that time, has seen a sharp spike in established sangha communities, teachers, Buddhist-influenced writers, and adherents.

Those participating in Buddhist groups or self-defining as Buddhists are not necessarily limited to their adherence to this belief-system. Indeed, many Buddhist participants consider themselves adherents to other religious systems or faiths as well. Even so, the number of those who self-identify as "Buddhists" in America has experienced a sharp increase in the past twenty years. In 2008, the Pew Forum's U.S. Religious Survey saw 7% of the American population surveyed self-identify as "Buddhist." This places Buddhism as the third most-populace religious group in America, with approximately 2,000,000 adherents. While the survey was most definitely not precise and left out large population groups, the data does point to something close to 170 percent growth of Buddhist adherents in America. Indeed, as found by the Pew survey (<http://pewresearch.org>), those who self-identify as Buddhists in America were largely U.S.-born Caucasian converts as opposed to Asian persons who may have had a family history with the tradition or immigrated from a country where Buddhism was a major religious influence (although the Pew study was faulted by Tricycle, a Buddhist magazine, and several Buddhist bloggers and websites for failing to interview non-English speaking Asian persons and leaving Hawaii out of the survey, as that state has a high Asian population and is recognized as a place where Buddhism has been very popular in the last decade.)

Buddhism often poses difficulties for theories designed to analyze religious belief systems, as Hamilton points out, "belief in god or gods is not a central tenet of Buddhist faith, which is often said, in consequence, to be atheistic" (Hamilton 71). In many Western Buddhist

traditions, emphasis on things such as rebirth have been de-emphasized, and in some communities emphasize that Buddhism can serve as a "rational" way of thinking about the universe rather than a "spiritual" or "religious" form.

In the last decade, anthropology, philosophy and the broader scholarly and public community has taken an interest in the interaction of Buddhism and how Buddhists across the world encounter the environment and environmental issues. This could be due to the ever-growing popularity of teachers and Buddhist leaders such as the Dalai Lama, Pema Chodron, and Thich Nhat Hanh. In particular, Thich Nhat Hanh has been an influential leader in Engaged Buddhism and in recent years has re-worked several traditional trainings both to appeal and speak to a more Western audience. Many of these trainings and teachings incorporate ecological messages, particularly featuring the issue of climate change as a central theme.

While one author suggests that there is not a Buddhist eco-spiritual movement in North America, and no agenda has been agreed upon by the self-identified Buddhists of America as a whole, Buddhist teachers and practitioners are beginning to make a greater presence in climate change dialogs. In 1989, the Dalai Lama took up ecological issues in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, proposing that Tibet be made into an international ecological reserve. Thich Nhat Hanh likewise began speaking on environmental issues, in particular incorporating issues of climate change into his conceptualization of Engaged Buddhism and making it a key theme in many of his trainings, teachings, and speeches. In 1993 at the Parliament of The World Religions in Chicago, Buddhist teachers and practitioners participated in discussions addressing global warming from a philosophical or religious perspective. The influences of "Green Buddhism" have spread since then, with books such as Thich Nhat Hanh's *The World We Have* and Stephanie Kaza's *Mindfully Green* offering advice specifically from a Buddhist perspective on how to address the issue of climate change in particular and other ecological concerns in general.

### **Section 3: Literature Review**

Understanding past and current thought on Buddhism in general and Buddhism in America in particular for this thesis was a hefty undertaking. In academic and popular literature, descriptions of Buddhism as well as the makeup of Buddhist practitioners in the West today was varied and extensive. For this particular review of the literature available, academic and popular texts that have shaped the trajectory of and provided insight into analysis presented in this paper. This literature review is certainly not a comprehensive examination of all information both academic and popular, written on the subject of Buddhism, but rather selected writings by scholars and other writers who have influenced the shape of anthropological analysis on the subject. I felt it important to include anthropological insights offered not only on Buddhism in America, but also writers who examined Buddhism in other areas in the world. These writers have presented important theoretical views on the topic and have shaped current inquiry into Buddhism in America, and many of the writers provided particular insights that are relevant to the discussions in this thesis. Indeed, many of the writers in this review who have analyzed Buddhism in other countries presented important theoretical concepts regarding Buddhism as a practice that were either supported or refuted by my own analysis and research within my selected group.

Charles Prebish, one of the foremost academics writing about Buddhism in Western society notes: "At the turn of the new millennium, Buddhism has become heard, visible, and experienced in numerous countries outside Asia. The last decades of the twentieth century saw an unparalleled interest, and at times, enthusiasm for, things Buddhist" (Prebish 2002; 1). Certainly, Buddhism saw an explosion of interest, as seen by the growth in those who self-identify as Buddhist practitioners according to the Pew survey, as well as a sharp upswing in books, magazines, and other publications designed specifically for a Western Buddhist audience.

In a brief internet search, one publishing search engine accessed over 16,000 titles as "recent" publications, and books by the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh have climbed the New York Times bestseller lists a number of times. Major publishing houses have even jumped on board (or at least, were on board before the recent recession impacted many publishers), with Putnam books branching out with Riverhead Books, an imprint dedicated to publishing titles dealing with religion in general and Buddhism in particular. Magazines such as *Shambhala Sun*, *Tricycle* and *The Meditation Bell* (which in particular focuses on Thich Nhat Hanh and his associated sanghas) can be purchased off the check-out shelves of stores such as Whole Foods. Indeed, in 2001, Tricycle had a circulation of approximately 50,000 copies per issue (Economist 2001: 24). Speeches by the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh are often held in large concert halls, with sell-out crowds. With such a massive up-tick in interest in Buddhism in particular, it is not surprising that academia has begun to seriously examine the phenomenon of Americans (and Westerners in general) who are adopting varied Buddhist concepts or ideologies.

### **Buddhism, Society, and Self in Past Anthropological Examinations**

As Prebish notes, previous scholarly writings on Buddhism tended to focus on the Asian experience. Examining anthropological accounts of Buddhism in the last century, theorists and researchers such as Max Weber, Melford Spiro, Michael Ames, Richard Gombrich, and Gannath Obeyesekere appear as influential writers on the subject and theoretical frameworks associated with the understanding of Buddhism. Indeed, Weber, an influential theorist perhaps best known for his economic-social models of Christianity in early America, examined Buddhism in the 1950s. Unlike Weber's examination of early-American Protestantism, he conceptualized Buddhism in India as largely separate from the political and economic environment. In [Religion in India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism](#), Weber attempts to examine what he considers the heterodox ideologies of Buddhism in Ancient Indian society. Examining how these religions influence mundane activities in everyday life, Weber essentially characterizes Buddhism

as "an other-worldly religion, an essentially apolitical [religion with] monks divorcing themselves from worldly concerns, and following the Buddha's message, being focused entirely on their own salvation and that of other sentient beings" (Morris 2006; 74). Weber suggested that this worldly rejection and self-salvation focus ultimately impeded socio-economic progress within the Buddhist monastic community and societies heavily influenced by this community (Tanchangya 2009: 1). Weber likewise noted that Buddhism, at least in its Canonical adoption, was (in ancient times) adopted mainly by the wealthy, who had the opportunity to renounce wealth and pleasure, rather than by the peasant masses, who had very little to reject in the first place (Spiro 1970: 67).

Spiro, in his influential examination of Burmese Buddhist communities echoed Weber's sentiments in many regards. Citing Weber himself, he suggests that many wealthy (or non-peasant) individuals took up the monastic life, as these eventual monastics tasted "the pleasures of the world and found them wanting" (Spiro 1970: 72). Calling this monastery-centered Buddhism "Nibbinic", he asserted that "The monk... is the 'true Buddhist'" (Morris 2006: 57). He argued that the monastics uphold Canonical Buddhism and are the adopters of the "true" Buddhist teachings such as world rejection, renunciation, and the seeking of Nirvana. He compares this to what he refers to as "kammatic" Buddhism, which he argues is found in the often-peasant lay population in Burma. In contrast to the Nibbinic monastic Buddhists, he suggests that these lay "buddhists" are frustrated with their current conditions of suffering and poverty and, instead of seeking renunciation or pursuing the ultimate release of Nirvana, instead utilize the Theravada principle of Karma. Upholding the dharma precepts, the kammatic lay population hopes to obtain merit, which will lead to a more pleasurable (and wealthy) rebirth in human form (Spiro 1970: 71). These "kammatic Buddhists" likewise often hold beliefs in indigenous spirits and gods, to whom they pray for things such as better crop yield or other "worldly" concerns.

In his examinations, Spiro was in part answering Levi-Strauss' work on totemism, instead, offering a psycho-social analysis that posited "that religious ideas are not so much used to think about or classify as to live by" (Morris 2006: 54). In presenting his analysis, Spiro utilized a theoretical framework inspired in part by both Durkheim and Freud. Spiro asserts that both Nibbinic and Kammatic Buddhists in Burma cast their experiences in terms of social connection, "so that the pervading cognitive and perceptual struggles which determine the acceptance or rejection of the religious doctrines are rooted in and reflect social relations" while incorporating Freud's notion that the most powerful of social relations that might determine religious doctrinal acceptance are to be found in an individual's early childhood family experiences (Spiro 1970: 70-71). Spiro expands on these ideas by delving into the psychology of Buddhist monastics in particular, suggesting that the Buddhist monastic system and beliefs work within the framework of the "Burmese personality" to create a particular psychological state for these Nibbinic Buddhist. Utilizing Freudian psychological analysis, Spiro suggests that monastic life for Buddhists can be infantilizing for the monk, allowing him to fulfill a deep-seated, unconscious need developed during childhood (Spiro 1970: 27). While Spiro does attempt to examine the psychological state of the kammatic (lay) Buddhists, he does not offer the same in-depth analysis utilizing a Freudian model for the lay Buddhists as he does for the Kammatic Buddhists.

During the same era as Spiro, Michael Ames examined the Buddhist communities of Sri Lanka, positing some similar assumptions with regard to a "disconnect" between monastic, canonical Buddhist thought and indigenous animism in the population. Looking at the lay population who would identify as "buddhist," Ames found, like Spiro, that individuals often regarded Buddhism as dealing with the "bigger picture," such as individual destiny and karmic rebirth: "What was beyond the ordinary" (Morris 2006: 64). Local nature spirits and gods, on the other hand, were offered prayers and looked towards to handle daily, worldly concerns such



as crops, floods, and other events that could be influenced by "natural laws." Ames asserted, however, that these practices involving animistic indigenous spirits and Buddhism as a structural religion were not intellectually confused by the Sri Lankan population. Instead, local spirit shrines were placed within Buddhist temples, with practitioners asserting that these spirits were, through this action, brought under the control of the monks in the Buddhist temple (Sharot 2001).

Returning to the Sri Lankan Buddhists in the 1980s, Richard Gombrich and Gananth Obeyesekere found the religious landscape there much changed from Ames' description (Moris 1990: 67). Examining the changing links between orthodox Theravada Buddhism and spirit-cults in the area, Gombrich and Obeyesekere determined that Buddhism in the area had shifted into what they termed "Protestant Buddhism" in Sri Lanka. As British colonial influence permeated the Sri Lankan society in the early 1900s, social changes (such as education for the masses) began to shape and influence local attitudes towards and understandings of Buddhism. In particular, the teacher Dharmapala shaped the emerging "Protestant Buddhist" movement that came to be the dominant Buddhist system amongst the emerging Sri Lankan merchant bourgeois (Gombrich, Obeyesekere 1990: 215). Chiding the British colonialists and missionaries for what he viewed as lax morals (including heavy drinking and laziness), Dharmapala created a doctrine including 200 rules of conduct inspired by Buddhist canonical values that could (and should) be used in the daily life of self-proclaimed Buddhists. These rules included things such as modesty in clothing, a rejection of alcohol and other substances such as betel nuts, and prohibitions against combing hair and picking lice in public places. In Dharmapala's envisioning, Buddhist values should be fundamental to daily activity, and "the layman should permeate his daily life with his religion; he should strive to make Buddhism permeate his whole society" (Gombrich, Obeyesekere 1990: 216). Politics, employment, and education were incorporated into Dharmapala's dictates, and many bourgeois Sri Lankans adopted Dharmapala's view of Buddhism as it first separated them in a demarcated way from the peasant mass and ultimately "fitted with their hopes of bettering

themselves and permitted their children to move into the same elite group as the Christians and compete with them for jobs in the upper echelon of the administration and the professions" (Gombrich, Obeyesekere 1990: 212).

### **Buddhist Ecological Activity in Asian Traditions**

While the Protestant Buddhism movement, as inspired by Dharmapala was largely concentrated to Sri Lanka, other communities around the world have seen teachers and monks attempt to instill a teaching that brought Buddhist values to daily life for the masses. As examined by Susan M. Darlington, Thailand, in particular, has seen the growth of so-called "ecology monks" who attempt to shift local economic and ecological values through use of Buddhist practices and principles. Invoking the Buddhist precept to relieve suffering (as rooted in greed, ignorance and hatred), the ecology monks of Thailand attempt to preserve forests, watersheds, and wildlife within their home village, which they hope will "mitigate the negative consequences of their disappearance on people's lives" (Darlington 1998: 3). In Thailand, the destruction of forests due to commercial logging, cash crop production, and road building has contributed to mass deforestation in rural areas. Many rural residents were encouraged to engage in this destruction for either state or corporate enterprises, which sometimes allowed them access to economic opportunities such as the growing of maize as a cash crop, but more often than not saw them economically marginalized as the forests they relied on for subsistence were cut down, or cash crops leeched nutrients from the soil and resulted in erosion. In recent decades, the monk Phrakhru Pitak, from the Nanthakhun region of Thailand, saw this deforestation and damage to watersheds and began to incorporate a strong ecological message in his teachings. "For years, the monk preached about ecological conservation, stressing the interconnection between social and natural environments and humankind's responsibility to each" (Darlington 1998: 6). In 1990, Phrakhru Pitak (along with some other ecology monks) moved beyond simply preaching the message and began the direct action of sponsoring tree ordinations in his home village. This

"ordination" involved wrapping a tree that was seen as threatened by clear cutting in the robes of a Buddhist monk and performing a ceremony that symbolically recognized the tree as a member of the Buddhist monastic community. This ceremonial invocation of monastic vows as associated to inanimate objects in nature was "used symbolically to remind people that nature should be treated as equal with humans, deserving of respect and vital for humans as well as life" (Darlington 1998: 9). During the ceremony of ordination, monks enacted skits and sang songs that emphasized respect for nature and ecological imperatives, with a sermon by Phrakhrū Pitak that dealt with "the relationship between the Buddha and nature, and the interdependence between the conditions of the forest and the villagers' lives" (Darlington 1998: 9). Like the teachings of Dharmapala as examined by Gombrich and Obeyesekere, it appears the ecology monks of Thailand (as viewed by Darlington) were attempting to involve Buddhist values in everyday life, utilizing Buddhist moral values as a reason to limit deforestation and economic marginalization for the village dwellers of Thailand. As in Sri Lanka, these teachings and activities of the ecology monks emphasize the need for Buddhist values in everyday activity, while changing the "practice of religion itself" for the Buddhist of Thailand (Darlington 1998: 12).

### **Examinations of Buddhism's Westward Growth**

These conceptualizations and views of Buddhism around the world are essential in understanding the way Buddhism was, until recently, conceptualized in an academic context. These researchers, in particular Spiro, Ames, Gombrich, and Obeyesekere, were keystone figures in Buddhist conceptualizations in academia. In all their views, Buddhism, though often recognized as a "world religion," was heavily identified with local beliefs or activities, and intricately linked with spirit cults, animistic beliefs, monastic systems, and indigenous religious traditions. This view, coupled with the "long-standing textual orientation of Buddhist Studies" (Baumann, Prebish 2002: 5) in Western academic contexts resulted in a methodological and theoretical limitation in examining Buddhism's spread in the West. Due to the belief that

Buddhism was firmly rooted in the Asian traditions as described by the afore mentioned anthropologist, examination of Buddhism in the West was often dismissed as a passing fad or else study of the developing practice was grouped amongst "new age" religious practices in the West. However, as the various strains of Buddhism in industrialized Western cultures has not only grown but in many ways become rooted in particular communities, many social scholars, Buddhist Studies academics, and others interested in religion are turning their attention to examining and teaching about the spread and enactment of Buddhism in the West today. Prebish perhaps best sums up this academic shift, noting that, "as recently as 1995, Buddhism was perceived to be an exclusively non-Western product... now, barely half a decade later, that is no longer the case" (Prebish 2002; 69).

As Buddhism in industrialized Western nations has grown by over 100 percent in adherents the last few decades, so has the study of Buddhism in these nations grown as well. As Prebish, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, noted in his essay "Studying the Spread and Histories of Buddhism in the West," courses in Western Buddhism in several universities have increased in the last decade, with a sharp upswing in academics either teaching or writing about Buddhism as it manifests in American society in particular in just the last 15 years. With this increase in academic studies and the large growth in participants in the varied forms of practice itself, both academic and popular literature on the subject of Buddhism in America has increased extensively in the last few years as well. As Prebish notes, from the year 1995 to 1997 alone, of the total number doctoral dissertations focusing on Buddhist-related topics, 5.9 percent of these dissertations explored aspects of American Buddhism, a significant increase from just a few years before (Prebish 2002; 76). In an email survey of university-level instructors offering courses on Buddhism, Prebish found that many instructors were offering either a course on Buddhism in the West or else incorporating some aspect of this topic into their courses on the topic of Buddhism in general. Prebish's findings indicate a growth in academic

recognition of American Buddhism, as in 1993, he could not find a single individual in an academic survey of specializations listing "Western Buddhism" as an area of specialization. As academic discussion and recognition of this line of inquiry has increased, so has academic and popular literature on this topic grown.

In an academic context, the leaders in research and discussion on Western Buddhism (in its many manifestations, it should be noted, as Buddhism in the West and the scholarship that accompanies its varied schools and facets is far from monolithic) as identified by Prebish include Martin Baumann, Richard Seager, Kenneth Tanaka, Christopher Queen, and Duncan Ryuken Williams (Prebish 2002; 1). In a non-academic context, the writings and teachings of practitioner-scholars (who are Westerners) such as Paul Carus, Paul Dahlke, Georg Grimm, Charles F. Knight, Natasha Jackson, Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Salzberg, Ruth Denison, John Colemann, Fred von Almen, Christopher Titmuss, Jack Kornfield, and Pema Chodron (an American who adopted Buddhism and was ordained as a Buddhist nun) have strongly influenced the uptake and understanding of Buddhism amongst the general Buddhist population all over America, Europe, Australia, South America, and South Africa (Baumann 2002: 57-58). The academic studies in recent years include identifying a "Buddhist" in the Western context, the population make-up of these self-identified adherents, the values and beliefs the particular groups of Buddhist communities in the West espouse, and the ways in which these communities and values differ from "traditional" Asian Buddhist practices and beliefs (Baumann 2002: 57).

In an attempt to examine Buddhism in the particular climes of the United States, Thomas Tweed (University of North Carolina) presented an examination of spectrum of Buddhist practices in the United States at present. Tweeds' analysis is essential to an understanding of Buddhism(s) in America, as he presents the various strains of practitioners in the United States and further breaks these practitioners into categories. In his article "Who is a Buddhist?" Tweed

identified what he called "Cultural Buddhists," or "Cradle Buddhists" who are those from traditionally Buddhist countries of origin (mainly Asian immigrants who currently live in the United States), and those he calls "Convert Buddhists," who are typically non-Asians in the United States who are self-identified as Buddhists. These "Converts" usually were not raised in the Buddhist tradition and have become introduced to Buddhist ideas and practices outside of their cultural community of origin. Within the category of "Convert Buddhists," Tweed further suggests that different levels of identification with Buddhist practices and beliefs exist amongst those who would self-identify as Buddhists. This examination of "Convert Buddhists" is of particular interest in this paper, as all the members of the Eyes of Compassion Sangha interviewed were not, as Tweed would categorize them, "Cultural Buddhists."

In his work, Tweed notes that, in a 1979 article entitled "What Constitutes a Buddhist," Prebish addressed the issue of determining just *who* was a Buddhist, acknowledging that "it has become difficult to constitute a Buddhist today" (Tweed 2002: 22). While Tweed identifies, examines, and allocated colorful names to many different "sorts" of individuals who might be associated with Buddhism in the United States at present, the groups that are most relevant to the discussion presented in this paper would be those he recognizes as self-identified Buddhists (those who are active in the Buddhist sangha and may give primacy to this belief system), although Tweed notes that many of these self-identified Buddhists in the United States indeed have something of a "creole" belief system that incorporates other cultural or traditional practices and that they may be "*not-just-buddhists*, who (if asked) might acknowledge dual or multiple religious identities" (Tweed 2002: 29). Tweed notes that such multiple self-identifications might make it difficult to identify those who would be considered "Buddhists" in the United States, although he seems to settle on a definition of Buddhists as those who are in some way active in Buddhist practice and self-identify with the tradition while cautioning against those who attempt an essentialist approach to academically identifying Buddhists in the United States. He

complicates this recognition somewhat by separating these identified Buddhists by what he terms "*Sympathizers*" and "*night-stand buddhists*." While these "types" of "Buddhists" are not as relevant to the discussions of this paper as discussion is limited to those who are active members of a sangha community (and indeed are considered by the sangha itself to be "members" as will be discussed in the analysis section of this thesis) and identify the Buddhist practice as a major part of their life, Tweed's discussion is important in the overall picture of Buddhism in the United States as he attempts to categorize those individuals who are interested in Buddhism, might purchase books on the subject or attend various lectures, or individuals who might be "drawn to Buddhism, even if they have gone no further in their practice than sitting almost cross-legged on two folded pillows" (Tweed 2002: 29). His analysis and examination of these many "types" of "Buddhism" might not prove particularly relevant to the analysis within this paper, but it does provide context for the larger examination of Buddhism in America and the academic-identified problem of determining just what constitutes a Buddhist in the United States.

As Tweed attempts to identify Buddhists in the United States, Gil Fronsdal attempts to examine ethical teachings involved in United States Buddhist practices in his essay "Virtue without Rules." Many traditions in the United States find their activities centered around what Fronsdal calls "Insight Meditation" or colloquially, "mindfulness practice" (Indeed, all practitioners consulted for this thesis analysis participated in a tradition or group that emphasized some form of this meditation or called their meditation sessions "mindfulness practices.") While Fronsdal in particular examines the Theravada movements and associated groups within the United States, his analysis is important for this paper as it discusses some discussion on what Fronsdal recognizes as the ethics, and invokes some of the important writers and teachers that are often presented during the meditation sessions of the Eyes of Compassion meditation sessions. In particular, Fronsdal quotes Buddhist teacher and writer Jack Kornfield, whose work is often read and discussed during Eyes of Compassion sessions. Fronsdal references a passage by Kornfield

that stresses that "discipline and morality are essential tools to the path of purification." (Fronsdal 2002: 290). Fronsdal notes that while these aspects of "morality" as referenced by Kornfield are vast and layered, he emphasizes the Five Precepts as the ethical touchstone amongst Theravada Buddhists in the United States tradition. As by Fronsdal, the Five Precepts are as follows:

I undertake the training precept to abstain from harming breathing beings.  
I undertake the training precept to abstain from taking what is not given.  
I undertake the training precept to abstain from sexual misconduct.  
I undertake the training precept to abstain from false speech.  
I undertake the training precept to abstain from alcohol, liquor, or spirits that are a cause for heedlessness.

Teachers and Buddhist practice groups in the Theravada tradition, Fronsdal notes, emphasize that these Precepts are not commandments but rather guidelines for ethical living. Fronsdal says that teachers in this tradition often are reluctant to apply them as rules with any particularity. "The most common instruction is to use the precepts as tools for reflection," says Fronsdal (2002: 295), suggesting that the practitioners in groups in which these precepts are offered usually stress the importance of "personal moral sense" rather than a rigorously structured and demarcated moral code. Fronsdal associates these precepts with the Western category of *virtue ethics*, "in which ethical behavior is seen as the expression of the character of the person" (Fronsdal 2002: 295). Meditating is said to enhance the understanding of the precepts and create a more virtuous inner nature by allowing a practitioner to identify, consider, and perhaps eliminate motivators that lead to behavior that is seen as not keeping with the precepts.

### **Examinations of "Engaged Buddhism" In the Contemporary United States**

In his analysis of Western Buddhism that is particularly relevant to this paper, Charles Queen (Harvard University) suggests that while virtue ethics can describe one aspect of Buddhist ethics as practiced in the United States, he identifies other "sorts of Buddhist ethics" as practiced today. While his various texts examine different "strains" of Buddhism as found in America today, it is his identification and discussion of "Engaged Buddhism" that proves most relevant to



this examination. Defining Engaged Buddhism, Queen says that the movement forms "a new paradigm of Buddhist liberation" that involves applying Dharma teachings to social movements and actions (Queen 2000: i). Queen suggests that, as Engaged Buddhism has found more and more currency in both the West and Asia, a new "style of practice" is developing, and Buddhism itself could be said to be entering a new "historical stage." As described in a previous chapter, Thich Nhat Hanh was a particular front runner in this movement, but Queen identifies several other teachers who have been influential in the West, such as American Zen teacher Bernard Tetsugen Glassman, all of whom owe a debt of influence to Mahatma Gandhi's movements of the 1930s and 1940s. These teachers, Queen suggests, emphasize an embrace of the idea of oneness and interrelatedness of all things and stress the "non-duality or interdependence of factors and actors in situations, particularly in situations involving pain, conflict, and violence, and the necessity of getting close to those who struggle and suffer in order to touch and heal their suffering" (Queen 2002: 328). In their emphasis on these particular concepts as presented in the Dharma and Buddhist writings, Queen notes that teachers and influential members of the Engaged Buddhist movement are attempting to shake up the Cartesian dualism that is often present in Western thought. Queen also asserts that the Engaged Buddhism as spread by Nhat Hanh and Glassman expresses and invokes Buddhist central teachings, such as the principle of compassion, emptiness, and skillful means. When addressing the issues of suffering in the world, Engaged Buddhist teachers will often invoke these concepts by cautioning their students to ensure that their actions are not doing further harm in a situation and that issues are engaged in "mindfully." (Queen 2000: 1-3).

For many Engaged Buddhists, personal enlightenment and the cessation of suffering in the world are intimately connected. Personal insight meditation is still highly valued, as many Engaged Buddhist teachings emphasize that an individual must address their own own personal engagement with things such as greed, anger, hatred, and delusion in order to attempt to

understand these issues in other individuals or within a whole society. As Queen says of this central Engaged Buddhist idea, "it is not possible to engage the world except through engagement with the mind" of the practitioner (Queen 2000: 11). Queen agrees with the idea posited by other examiners such as Spiro and Ames that some strains of Buddhism stressed a disengagement from the world. In his descriptions of Engaged Buddhism, his findings appear to be far closer to that observed by Gombrich's and Obeyesekere's where they found Protestant Buddhism invoked as a force of action and a structure of ethics that might be acted upon in daily life. While Gombrich and Obeyesekere encountered a more strictly dictated and doctrinal form of behavioral codes for "Buddhist living" in Sri Lanka (post Dharamapala), Queen finds the Engaged Buddhists of the West emphasizing careful self-examination (through meditation) as a foundation for enacting a "Buddhist lifestyle" that involves not only the self, but the larger community and the social issues inherent in that community.

For many scholars researching or examining Engaged Buddhism, the key aspect of this form of Buddhism is its emphasis on the principle of interdependence. Sallie B. King of James Madison University, suggests that the "worldview" developed by Engaged Buddhist teachers, writers, and dedicated practitioners is centered on this concept and the idea that personal actions have implications beyond the individual. She states that Engaged Buddhism emphasizes that "every action has implications for a world, a 'universal dimension' to...every act" (King 2005: 160). King says that influential teachers of Engaged Buddhism (in which she includes the Tibetan Dalai Lama, who is not universally accepted as an "Engaged Buddhist") have embraced some Western ideas such as human rights, and infused their teachings on subjects of Buddhist philosophy, ethics, and spirituality with these Western ideas.

Queen finds that Engaged Buddhism is different from other "forms" of Buddhism in that it asserts that the Buddhist ideas of cultivation of mindfulness, wisdom, and compassion will

inexorably lead to action on the part of the practitioner. This could mean examining an issue from all sides, and not acting out of anger or rage, but rather invoking or calling for change in a way deemed by the participant as peaceful and non-harming. Queen cites things such as peace marches or days of silence, or even presenting writings that do not place blame on any actors or situations, volunteering at places such as hospices, or engaging in mindfulness-based service activities. Important to many of the Engaged Buddhist movements and teachings are ethics such as altruism, discipline, and even the idea of virtue itself. Queen, a leader in the study of this emerging paradigm in America in particular, provides the main operating definition of "Engaged Buddhism" for the purposes of this paper.

While many varieties of Engaged Buddhism have been documented (and indeed, many theories on the concept of what exactly constitutes or motivates Engaged Buddhism exist as well), a great deal of attention has been paid to so-called "Green Buddhists" or "Ecology Buddhists" and how these practitioners and groups invoke and utilize Buddhist concepts, principles, and ethics in their discussions and actions with regards to ecology and environmentalism. As previously mentioned, the idea of Buddhist ideas being used in an effort to preserve, protect, or engage in environmental discussions is not isolated to America and the rest of the industrialized West (as Darlington notes). However, the way in which Westerners conceptualize environmental issues and how Buddhism does and should engage with these issues appears very different in style from the ecology monks in places such as Thailand (Darlington 1998: 6).

In the West, Stephanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft (of the University of Vermont and Lehigh University, respectively) note that "Buddhist environmentalism [in the West] draws from both old and new sources" (Kaza, Kraft 2000: 1). Since the 1980s, Buddhist teachers and writers in the West have been particularly engaged with the idea of "environmentalism," and some (such

as the Buddhist Peace Fellowship) even gave prominence to environmentalist concerns since their foundations. During this early phase of adoption, notes Kaza and Kraft, "Buddhist environmental views tended towards a romanticized version of human-nature relationships" (Kaza, Kraft 2000: 355). This continued until recent decades when the climate change crisis became a major topic of conversation and impetus for action within Buddhist groups, and dialogue often shifted from the "romantic" view of nature present in the earlier days (19th century to the 1950s) of Buddhist thoughts regarding nature in the United States, to a more scientifically informed conversation.

In more recent times, as Kaza notes, Buddhism in the United States has seen an outgrowth of groups involved in what is termed "Buddhist Environmental Activism." This activism involves things such as "1.) holding-actions of resistance, 2.) analysis of social structures and creation of new alternatives, and 3.) cultural transformation" (Kaza 2000: 170). Groups such as the Green Gulch Zen community in California conducted "ecosattvas" (Buddhist rituals altered to address ecological concerns) to protest the logging of old growth redwood forests in northern California. They likewise invoked the traditional Tibetan idea of Tertan, or sacred buried treasures, by making a pilgrimage deep into a redwood forest to carry and bury a Tibetan treasure vase. Other groups, such as the Buddhists for Concerned Animals, address other issues such as factory farming and food animal mistreatment by invoking Buddhist teachings, values, and ideas and utilizing these concepts as awareness-raising tools for other Buddhists and animal rights activists. All these Buddhist groups are creating new materials and texts, and re-shaping or adopting Buddhist canonical ideas and values in ways specific to their cultural place and interest (such as interest in ecology.) This sort of activist "Engaged Buddhism" is swiftly becoming one of the major Buddhist traditions in the United States (Kaza 2000: 159-161). "Engaged Buddhism," unlike the Buddhism conceptualized by Weber, Spiro, and Ames, sees participants actively addressing issues larger than personal salvation in their activities, as well as asserting that the world influences their own practice strongly.

Stephanie Kaza and Kristen Steele likewise saw Buddhist traditional values adopted, shaped, and put into daily practice by many different Buddhist group participants when they conducted a survey on food choices made by contemporary Buddhists in the West. Surveying a wide variety of Buddhists in an array of Buddhist communities (ranging from Tibetan to Zen to non-denominational), Kaza and Steele found a high level of Buddhists altering their food behaviors post-adoption of the practice. According to their research, contemporary Buddhist practitioners were more likely to adopt a vegetarian diet structure as well as make more ecologically sound food and dietary choices in daily eating habits. They also found that participants talked frequently about "daily life ideally becoming one's spiritual practice" (Kaza, Steele 2000: 50). Things such as eating become a practice or part of the larger practice. "Modern interpretations of Buddhist reinforce the attitude that everything is practice" and that all things are involved within this practice (*ibid*). This is a shift from the way in which Weber, Spiro, and Ames envisioned Buddhism and the ways in which it was involved with not only individuals, but society as well.

## **Section 4: Introduction to the Eyes of Compassion**

Discovering an academic and personal interest in Buddhism during my early years of college, I set out to learn more about this world tradition in a variety of ways. At the age of 21, I joined a group sponsored by Naropa University that traveled to India and Bhutan on what might be considered a mini learning pilgrimage. While there, I was introduced to the foundation stories of the Sakyamuni Buddha, non-canonical stories (such as those of the pre-Sakyamuni Buddha), the basic differences between Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana Buddhism in the Asian countries, monastic practices, personal meditation practices, and other Buddhist teachings and activities. This immersive, albeit short, tour throughout the Buddhist communities of India and Bhutan opened my eyes to a wealth of information about Buddhism as it is practiced in several communities today. As a guest of several monasteries (most of which were based in the Vajrayana and Tibetan traditions), I was able to engage with several monks, teachers (rinpoches), Buddhist adherent, and texts during this time. While the experiences and depth of learning were too great to detail here, it was a life-changing experience that brought me back to America with a passion for Buddhist teachings and community.

Since my experience had been with the Tibetan school of Buddhism and my travels informed by guides who were part of the Shambhala tradition, I sought out a Shambhala community in my then home of Fort Collins, Colorado. A highly structured community, this community met twice a week for sessions that involved both silent and walking meditation, and also met several times a year for various celebrations and rituals that involved chanting, meditation, discussion, speeches by teachers, and other activities. This group served as my first introduction to Buddhism as it was experienced in America, and it was here I learned the basics of Shamata meditation, which is a meditative practice that encourages a concentration on the in and out breaths while sitting in deep contemplation.

In 2008, after moving to Denver, I was invited by a friend to attend a meditation session at the Eyes of Compassion Sangha, located on Columbine Street, just a few blocks from the University of Denver. Here I found a community of practitioners, who are in turn part of a larger community of individuals who engage in Buddhist practice in Colorado, American, and indeed the world. This community has served as my "home" community ever since, as I attended meditation sessions and other sangha-sponsored activities such as group potlucks and "Days of Mindfulness."

Founded in 2001 by a handful of individuals interested in meditation and guided by the teachings of Vietnamese Buddhist leader Thich Nhat Hanh, the Eyes of Compassion Sangha is part of the larger Colorado Community for Mindful Living (CCML) organization. CCML's mission statement reads:

The CCML is an umbrella group of Colorado Sanghas with representatives from each sangha. Our group is modeled on the Mindfulness Practice Center (Vermont). CCML is dedicated to the creation of a mindful culture fostering loving families, happy individuals, and a healthy planet. The practice of mindfulness, an innate human ability, has the power to bring about this transformation. We intend to promote mindfulness on all levels of society. These objectives are to be furthered through the establishment of mindfulness sanghas. Therefore, the function of the CCML is to create a secular vehicle sangha that would enable us to host Thich Nhat Hanh and his sangha, support Colorado sanghas, build mindfulness practice sanghas, bring in teachers, organize retreats, and represent a sounding board for the individual sanghas' requests, issues, and ideas. CCML does not dictate the practices and procedures of individual sanghas. We make decisions by consensus whenever possible and above all trust the wisdom of the sangha eyes. (<http://www.ccml.info>).

As indicated by the mission statement, the CCML does not dictate nor govern the operations of the Eyes of Compassion, but rather provides a linkage between groups that allows interaction between different community sanghas and the Dharma Cloud monastic community located in Morrison, Colorado that hosts several monthly meetings, lectures, visits by monks, and itself serves as a home for a Vietnamese-speaking Buddhist community. As noted on the CCML website (and by participants in the CCML sanghas), the teachings and larger community of students who are influenced by Thich Nhat Hanh (referred to affectionately by some practitioners as "Thay," which roughly translates to "teacher") are a uniting factor for many of the CCML-connected sanghas in the Denver metro area.

A Vietnamese-born student of Buddhism who took monastic vows at the age of 16, Thay rose to notoriety in the 1960s due to his actions to end the war in his native country. Considered something of a "radical" even in his monastic community, Thich Nhat Hanh early on called for the traditional Buddhist training to "be expanded to include foreign languages, culture, and philosophy," and rejection of these requests led him and five of his compatriots to depart Vietnam as well as monastic training in Vietnam for Saigon University and eventually led to studying and activism in the West. After establishing a temple in Saigon, Thich Nhat Hanh left the Asian subcontinent in order to teach peaceful protest measures and raise awareness of the situation in Vietnam, visiting Europe and the United States, as well as enrolling to study comparative religions at Princeton University and lecturing on Buddhism at Columbia University in New York. In 1966, when attempting to return after a series of visits to the West, the Vietnamese government denied his re-entry. An exile from Vietnam, Thay continued his work in finding an end to the war in Vietnam while traveling the West and meeting some of the major political and social figures of that era, including Edward Kennedy, Robert MacNamara, Thomas Merton, and Martin Luther King. In 1967, King nominated Thay for a Noble Peace Prize for his efforts in regards to Vietnam (Toms, 1998: 21). Since that time, Thay has worked mainly in the West,



establishing first the Sweet Potatoes Meditation Center in 1975 and then the influential Buddhist community Plum Village in France during the 1980s. These communities later led to the establishment of the monastic and lay community called the Order of Interbeing. CCML's Dharma Cloud monastery is associated with this Order, although it is undetermined if the Dharma Cloud and its connected sangha communities would be officially included in the Order of the Interbeing organization.

Thay's teachings are based in a foundation of a combination of Zen and Theravada Buddhism, with influences from Mahayana Buddhism as well. Ideas from Western psychology are also present in his teachings and meditation strategies, and many of his instructional guides, readings, lectures, books, and teachings are geared towards creating a "modern" dharma with the Western practitioner in mind. "Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings arise from traditional Buddhist sources, but they are frequently renewed in contemporary language to address the modern situation in the West," notes Patricia Hunt-Perry, a professor of social thought at Ramapo College in New Jersey, and Dr. Lyn Fine, a co-founder of the Community of Mindfulness in New York and a long-time student of Thich Nhat Hanh (Hunt-Perry, Fine 2000; 49). With over 100 books in print (most in English), Thay's teachings have reached a large segment of the population of the West, and his influence is not limited to Buddhist practitioners alone.

Thich Nhat Hanh likewise coined the term "Engaged Buddhism," a concept of meditative and socially interactive Buddhist practice. While, as Kenneth Kraft notes in his essay "New Voices in Engaged Buddhist Studies," "the definition of 'engaged Buddhism' is far from settled," (Kraft 2000, 486), Thay's idea of Engaged Buddhism involves applying the Buddhist conceptualizations of compassion and non-harm to "all aspects of life, political, social and cultural" (Hunt-Perry, Fine 2000; 36). For Thay, this involves invoking Buddhist teachings to actively participate in issues of social, economic, political, and cultural concern. In his dialogue

with Catholic peace activist Daniel Berrigan, Thich Nhat Hanh offered one brief distillation of his conceptualization of Engaged Buddhism:

In our tradition, monasteries are only a kind of laboratory to spend time in, in order to discover something. They are not an end, they are a means. You get training and practice in the spiritual life so you can go elsewhere and be with other people. (Hunt-Perry, Fine 2000, 42).

His associate and compatriot in the establishment of the Sweet Potatoes Meditation Center, Sister Chan Khong notes, "They believed that Buddhism had much to contribute to real social change... in a movement for social change according to the Buddhist spirit" (Hunt-Perry, Fine 2000; 42). Called sometimes a "radical practice," Thich Nhat Hanh emphasized that "embodying peace... itself is a cultural transformation" (Hunter-Perry, Fine 2000, 28). Bringing the idea he described to Chan Khong to the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, Thay first focused his efforts on interacting with Western protesters who acted in regards to the war in his homeland, Vietnam. Engaging with activists and organizing events, Thich Nhat Hanh emphasized a need for the idea of "peace" in protest actions. This concept found particular sway with activists such as Martin Luther King, whose non-violent protest actions were a template for many of the civil rights and war protests during that era and beyond. Thich Nhat Hanh and both members and non-members of his sangha communities have applied similar principles to other historical moments in recent years as well, including a "peace walk" and meditation session at the Vietnam Veterans wall, encouragement of resolution to the original Gulf War in Iraq, and events such as the Rodney King beating, in which he encouraged observers, protesters and rioters to examine not only the pain of King himself, but also to examine the ways in which the police themselves were psychologically and spiritually influenced by the violence of society. Thich Nhat Hanh has also offered discussions on the discrimination of people of color in Western society and GLBT individuals, and those in societies across the world that have seen marginalization or restriction of rights (Hunt-Perry, Fine 2000; 54). Today, Thich Nhat Hanh still often speaks to specific national and

international incidents of what he identifies as social injustice or violence, with an increasing emphasis on climate change and global environmental issues.

Thich Nhat Hanh's concept of Engaged Buddhism generally involves an initial focus on the meditative practice, which he emphasizes "means to be aware of what is going on within oneself" (Hunt-Perry, Fine 2000; 48). Once a deeper understanding of thought processes, motivations, and personal actions is developed through the meditative process (which, in Thich Nhat Hanh's tradition typically involves either silent sitting meditation, silent walking meditation, or contemplative eating/drinking meditation), this understanding can be applied to develop a greater understanding and thus subsequent identification with other individuals and beings, both living and non-living. Thich Nhat Hanh suggests this identification may spur an individual to action, such as engaging in a peace-oriented protest, calling for legislation or governmental action, or careful action to bring about structural change. However, as Hunt-Perry and Fine note, "Thich Nhat Hanh offers a type of engaged Buddhism that does not stop at policy change but includes fundamental consciousness transformation" (Hunt-Perry, Fine, 2000; 48). Other Buddhist teachers, such as Master Truc Lam, and other non-Buddhist activists have adopted these ideologies and adapted it to their particular concerns and communities. The Eyes of Compassion sangha of Denver, Colorado often discusses these "engaged" teachings of Thay, as well as a variety of his other teachings.

The Eyes of Compassion itself is not rigorously structured or governed. While some members serve in capacities such as treasurer or volunteer for committees that organize events such as the annual Day of Mindfulness put on by the Eyes of Compassion group, there is no "ruling" body or hierarchical leadership structure. While discussion at a recent gathering included talk of forming a "Caretaking committee" to address functional concerns (such as building rental and event organization), currently no governing or directive committee exists for

the group, and there are no specific group "leaders." Indeed, each month, different sangha members volunteer to serve as a meditation and discussion "leader." This "leadership" does not require governance, but rather involves choosing sutras and meditative phrases for the guided segment of the meditation, leading (or directing) the chanting and singing, lighting the candles to open the sangha, ringing the two bells (one large, one small) to signal different segments of the meditation session, and sometimes choosing a reading to open the open-sharing dharma discussion. Many times, "leaders" engage other members to assist with these tasks, and all participants are usually invited to take part in the singing and chanting of the opening and closing songs and "gathas" (affirmations offered by Buddhist teachers or writings).

The Eyes of Compassion sangha gathers three to four Thursday evenings a month, starting at 7:00 pm, at the Mountainview Friends Meeting House (a Quaker-owned meeting house that is rented, free of charge, from the Friends organization). Meetings are not held on the first Thursday of the month, as the meeting space is utilized for a different group on this night. While the structure is not rigid, most of the monthly leaders follow a general meditation session outline (the outline and materials to be used for the session are provided to leaders in a binder that is kept on the Friends Meeting House premises.) This format usually involves the following chronology: The singing of songs while awaiting all members to gather, announcements and greetings, the lighting of candles placed in the center of the room as well as the recitation of the candle lighting gatha ("Reminded of countless Buddhas, I calmly light these candles, brightening the face of the earth"), and sometimes an introduction to the meditation session. Following the guided meditation, the leader or a designated individual rings the smaller "walking" bell and participants are directed to rise to their feet for a walking meditation session. This meditation takes place for twenty minutes, with participants walking silently in a clock-wise circle either around the room or, if the weather is conducive, a circle around the meeting hall. At the end of twenty minutes, the small bell is rung again and participants return to their seats or cushions and

participate in twenty minutes of silent meditation. When this segment is over, the large bell is sounded, followed by the small bell, which directs participants to move towards the kitchen where they can gather tea and snacks. Participants return to their seats for five minutes of silence, after which follows the reading of the "Five Contemplations" and participants then eat their snacks or drink tea in silence. After this, the leader usually offers a selected reading of their choice and opens the floor for the "dharma discussion." Following this group discussion session, a chant called "The Dedication of the Merit" is sung in English by either the leaders or the entire group, with the end of the session with a signaled by the ringing of the large bell.

The opening songs are often songs to which members of the sangha have been introduced at meditation retreats, days of mindfulness (in which practitioners from community sanghas gather to spend the day in meditation, hear teachings, or engage in activities and group discussion, amongst other Buddhism-related events). Song sheets are provided for members, but many of the songs are easily memorized and usually begun *acapella* by community members. These songs are often taught in various communities connected with Thich Nhat Hanh (indeed, the text for the songs can be found on various Community of Mindful Living websites). The texts of some of the most-requested songs (as experienced during participation in the Eyes of Compassion Sangha) are as follows:

Breath In, Breathing Out  
Breathing in, breathing out (2x)  
I am blooming as a flower  
I am fresh as the dew  
I am solid as a mountain  
I am firm as the earth  
I am free

Pure Land  
Here Is The Pure Land  
Here Is The Pure Land,  
The Pure Land is here,  
I smile in mindfulness,  
And dwell in the present moment.  
The Buddha is seen in an autumn

leaf,  
The Dharma in a floating cloud,  
The Sangha body is everywhere,  
My true home is right here.  
Breathing in, flowers are blooming,  
Breathing out, I am aware  
that bamboos are swaying.  
My mind is free,  
And I enjoy every moment.

No Coming, No Going

No coming, no going,  
No after, no before,  
I hold you close to me,  
I release you to be so free,  
Because I am in you  
and you are in me. (2x)

These songs typically are performed by the group before the meditation session formally starts, although they are occasionally incorporated into segments of the session. Aspects of these songs are often used as gathas during the guided meditation session that follows the lighting of the candles.

After the candles are lit and the leader offers the opening gatha, the group participates in the Opening Chant:

With posture upright and solid,  
We are seated at the foot of the Bodhi tree.  
Body, speech, and mind are one in stillness;  
There is no more thought of right or wrong.  
Body and mind dwell in perfect mindfulness.  
We rediscover our original nature,  
Leaving the shores of illusion behind.  
Noble sangha, diligently bring your minds into meditation.  
*Namo Shakymunaye Buddhaya (x3)*

The leader sounds the large bell (sometimes called the "Mindfulness Bell") during the chanting of this last line, calling the sangha into the guided meditation session. During the guided meditation, members sit in silent meditation, although during this period, the leader will often sound the smaller bell (the "walking bell") and read a gatha or a short teaching or phrase for

group members to contemplate on if they choose. Occasionally, the leader will offer no gatha or saying, but rather ring the mindfulness bell at intervals for a "bell meditation." This first segment lasts twenty minutes, and at the end of the session, the Mindfulness Bell is sounded by the leader, and group members are invited to stretch and ready themselves for walking meditation.

Prior to sounding any directive bells or instructing the participants to stand, the leader will occasionally offer a short introduction to the walking meditation session, sometimes discussing the ways in which they personally structure their walking meditation (such as attention and mindfulness of touching the floor with each step) or occasionally offer a gatha for participants to recall with each step, an idea or phrase with which they might walk.

Walking meditation takes place inside the meeting center during colder months: During this, participants walk in a large circle around the room in silence, taking slow steps. During warmer times, the doors of the sangha are often opened and participants walk through the main meeting room, out the back door, circle around the building, and return to inside. Often, leaders will emphasize an attention to or feeling of nature or the "outside world" before this form of walking meditation. Walking meditation lasts twenty minutes, after which the leader sounds the small bell and group members return to their seats. A silent meditation period (during which no gathas are offered) follows, lasting another twenty minutes.

After this time, the leader rings the large bell and invites members to silently proceed to the kitchen to obtain snacks and tea. Snacks are typically cookies, usually store bought or homemade. In the store bought versions, many varieties are organic or from natural food stores. Participants are instructed to return to their seats with their treats and tea and sit again in quiet contemplation until the leader again rings the bell. After the ringing of the bell, the leader (or

another volunteer participant) reads aloud the Five Contemplations, as composed by Thich Nhat Hanh:

This food is a gift from the whole Universe—the Earth, the sky, and much hard work. May we be worthy to receive it. May we transform unskillful states of mind, especially the habit of eating without moderation. May we take only the foods that nourish us and prevent illness. We accept this food to realize the path of understanding and love.

Participants then eat and drink tea in five minutes of silence, allowing for more quiet contemplative time.

At the end of the silent period, the leader will usually speak to the participants for a moment. If it is the first meeting of the month, the Five Mindfulness Trainings are read aloud, usually by various group members). While several versions of the Trainings are available, the most popular with the sangha appear to be the recently revised Five Mindfulness Trainings as composed by Thich Nhat Hanh. The trainings are as follows:

1.) Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, or in my way of life. Seeing that harmful actions arise from anger, fear, greed, and intolerance, which in turn come from dualistic and discriminative thinking, I will cultivate openness, non-discrimination, and non-attachment to views in order to transform violence, fanaticism, and dogmatism in myself and in the world.

2.) Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I am committed to practicing generosity in my thinking, speaking, and acting. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others; and I will share my time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need. I will practice looking deeply to see that the happiness and suffering of others are not separate from my own happiness and suffering; that true happiness is not possible without understanding and compassion; and that running after wealth, fame, power and sensual pleasures can bring much suffering and despair. I am aware that happiness depends on my mental attitude and not on external conditions, and that I can live happily in the present moment simply by remembering that I already have more than enough conditions to be happy. I am committed to practicing Right Livelihood so that I can help reduce the suffering of living beings on Earth and reverse the process of global warming.

3.) Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I am committed to cultivating responsibility and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. Knowing that sexual desire is not love, and that sexual



activity motivated by craving always harms myself as well as others, I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without true love and a deep, long-term commitment made known to my family and friends. I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct. Seeing that body and mind are one, I am committed to learning appropriate ways to take care of my sexual energy and cultivating loving kindness, compassion, joy and inclusiveness – which are the four basic elements of true love – for my greater happiness and the greater happiness of others. Practicing true love, we know that we will continue beautifully into the future.

4.) Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and compassionate listening in order to relieve suffering and to promote reconciliation and peace in myself and among other people, ethnic and religious groups, and nations. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am committed to speaking truthfully using words that inspire confidence, joy, and hope. When anger is manifesting in me, I am determined not to speak. I will practice mindful breathing and walking in order to recognize and to look deeply into my anger. I know that the roots of anger can be found in my wrong perceptions and lack of understanding of the suffering in myself and in the other person. I will speak and listen in a way that can help myself and the other person to transform suffering and see the way out of difficult situations. I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and not to utter words that can cause division or discord. I will practice Right Diligence to nourish my capacity for understanding, love, joy, and inclusiveness, and gradually transform anger, violence, and fear that lie deep in my consciousness.

5.) Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I will practice looking deeply into how I consume the Four Kinds of Nutriment, namely edible foods, sense impressions, volition, and consciousness. I am determined not to gamble, or to use alcohol, drugs, or any other products which contain toxins, such as certain websites, electronic games, TV programs, films, magazines, books, and conversations. I will practice coming back to the present moment to be in touch with the refreshing, healing and nourishing elements in me and around me, not letting regrets and sorrow drag me back into the past nor letting anxieties, fear, or craving pull me out of the present moment. I am determined not to try to cover up loneliness, anxiety, or other suffering by losing myself in consumption. I will contemplate interbeing and consume in a way that preserves peace, joy, and well-being in my body and consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family, my society and the Earth.

During other weeks of the month, the leader typically offers a reading they have selected. Occasionally, the reading will correspond to a theme the leader has selected for either the night or the month (although the monthly theme is a recent development in the sangha it appears- themes in 2008 and 2009 included "love," "sangha," and "impermanence" and "the environment."). Popular texts from which to read include Thich Nhat Hanh's books, Pema

Chodron's writings, Jack Kornfield's *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry* and other short readings that usually contain a Buddhist theme. Texts are rarely canonical and usually are a story told by the author about how they utilize Buddhism in daily life, or challenges they have met in their practice, or advice for deepening and enhancing practice for individuals or groups.

After the selected text is read, the floor is opened for dharma discussion. This is an open-share period that provides a time in which sangha members are encouraged to share ideas, concerns, struggles, or joys they have experienced in their practice or lives. Members are encouraged, sometimes by the leader who reads a paragraph provided in the sangha leadership materials, to refrain from overt political or theoretical discussions, to listen deeply to others in the group, and to feel free to bring up issues in their practice as they see fit. As participants wish to speak, they bow to the group and the bow is returned by other group members. It is sometimes encouraged during the reading of the opening paragraph to allow time for quiet contemplation in between speakers or if a particularly difficult topic was discussed. Participants usually emphasize how they are using (or struggling with using) the practice in their daily lives, families, jobs, with their inter-personal relationships, and so on. Traditional Buddhist concepts (such as the Three Jewels or the Eightfold Path) are occasionally mentioned by members, but typically within the context of discussing their personal practice.

After roughly thirty minutes or so of dharma discussion time, the leader will often announce that the end of the session is drawing closed, and if no more participants wish to speak, the Sharing of the Merit is usually chanted, followed by the ringing of the mindfulness bell twice to call the session to a close. The Sharing of the Merit is as follows:

Reciting the sutras,  
Practicing the way of awareness,  
Gives rise to benefits without limits.  
We vow to share the fruits with all beings.

We vow to offer tribute to parents, teachers, friends, and numerous beings  
Who give guidance and support along the path.

This is the usual Thursday night sangha meditation session format. It is loosely structured and occasionally, leaders will choose to offer things such as a deep relaxation session or other activity for the evening (when I served as co-leader, for instance, we encouraged members to participate in a "laughing meditation" session during the period usually reserved for the silent meditation segment.)

## **Section 5: Methodology**

As noted, my involvement with Buddhism has been both in the context of a practitioner and an academic. The fundamentals of my understanding of Buddhism began during my years as an undergraduate at Colorado State University and were extended during a Buddhist studies trip (as described previously in this paper) that took me to India and Bhutan, my graduate studies and subsequent research papers for many courses during these years on this topic, and my own personal studies of Buddhist texts, writings, and theories.

In 2003, I began my interaction with Western Buddhist communities, engaging in the community first in Fort Collins, Colorado. Participating and documenting the activities of the Fort Collins Shambhala Center allowed me to develop a basic understanding of the activities that take place in at least one Western manifestation of the tradition. Attending weekly meditation sessions, I took a brief instructional course in shamatha meditation, which is practiced by the Shambhala participants during the first and second segments of their weekly meditation sessions. I also participated in the activities of the community Shambhala Day event, documenting the proceedings for a research paper that dealt with ritual and ritual behavior. This foundational, participant information proved essential to my understanding of academic readings and analyzes of Western practice.

During this period, I conducted a brief survey of ten Shambhala meditation practitioners who were attending a weekly meditation session, and conducted an in-depth interview with one Shambhala participant (and Fort Collins Shambhala Center handyman) that dealt with the topic of what it meant to be a Buddhist practitioner in America and how such practitioners engaged with Western society. The survey questions asked basic information on how often participants meditated, how often they attended the weekly meditation sessions at the center, and if the uptake

of this practice changed their consumer activities, amongst other close-ended inquiries. This research was summarized for an in-class assignment and helped me develop a clearer picture of how active members of this community were, and how one participant in particular conceptualized a "Western Buddhist." While the survey and interview data collected during this early research phase will not be heavily used in the analysis portion of this paper, these early surveys did provide some interesting information that reaffirmed some of the survey data that was later conducted with the Eyes of Compassion group. Likewise, some of the things discussed by the interview subject from this group mirrored things some interview participants from the Eyes of Compassion noted, and so this information will be presented briefly in conjunction with portions of the analysis of the Eyes of Compassion information.

While I attended the Shambhala Center occasionally and interacted socially with some of the members after this brief study, it was not until I moved to Denver that I began to regularly participate in another Buddhist community. This was the Eyes of Compassion Sangha, which I began attending mostly-weekly in 2007. In these weekly meetings, I participated in silent meditation, guided meditation (as offered by changing monthly sangha leaders), eating meditations, walking meditations, "dharma discussions," relaxation meditations, and other activities as outlined in the Background chapter of this document. In 2007 and 2008, I served as "co-leader" for two months, acting as bell ringer and choosing the guided meditations and reading topics for the weekly meetings. I also participated in the Eyes of Compassion-organized Day of Mindfulness in 2008, a member potluck (during which members met to socialize, discuss organizational topics, and engage in moments of silent contemplation) as well as volunteered to assist with the 2007 People's Fair booth sponsored by the sangha in which members handed out sangha information, sold merchandise, talked with members, and discussed the group with Fair attendees. With all this activity, I developed a deeper understanding of the group beliefs and practices as well as identified many members of this group. Dharma discussions in particular

provided a wealth of understanding, as they were offered as unstructured discussion time within the meditation sessions in which participants could volunteer to address their own practices, challenges faced in their daily lives and how they invoked the practice in these challenges, and other ideas they had with regard to their Buddhist values or activities. Participation in these discussions helped me identify some major themes in the group as presented by the group (such as the attention to environmental and ecological issues as a theme amongst many participants and how they invoked the Buddhist practice as they understood it in dealing with these issues on a daily basis). Coupled with the readings chosen by sangha leaders and the selected gathas presented during guided meditation, a greater understanding of how this group generally conceptualized "the practice" and Buddhism in general began to take shape.

In 2008, I posted a request to the sangha's online listserv requesting in-depth interviews with sangha members. This listserv was particular to the Eyes of Compassion, and was made up of group members I had either met in sangha or at sangha activities. Before posting, I consulted one long-term member who frequently posted to the list and I felt served as the unofficial notion disseminator for the list. My initial email request generated eight responses by members I had identified as participants in the group (most of whom I had frequently encountered at sangha itself.) These individuals ranged in age from 30 years old to approximately 70 years old. Interviews were conducted with these individual members following this initial contact. The majority of these interviews were conducted via phone, owing to conflicting schedules of participants, my own full-time work schedule, distance, and my limited sphere of travel due to vehicular issues. One interview was conducted via electronic communication (email) due to the fact that the participant (a regular sangha member and my co-leader during the two months I "guided" the sangha meditations and readings) had moved out of the country previous to the interview process, but follow up discussions were held with this participant via instant messenger online as well.

Questions generally involved a description of their own practice, how they first became involved with the practice, their engagement with the sangha, Buddhist-oriented activities in which they participated outside the weekly sangha meetings (such as retreats), their views on the idea of "environmentalism," the activities in their lives they saw as involving these environmental views, the ways in which their Buddhist views and environmental views were either interlinked or not interlinked, shifts they experienced in their environmental views post adoption of Buddhist views, ways in which the sangha itself engaged in what they saw as environmental-values oriented activity, and other topics involving their beliefs and practices. These interviews were open ended and attempted to allow participants to share their views of key topics relevant to this paper with a minimal amount of prompting. Often this led to a more free-associative style interview in which participants themselves would identify over-arching themes in their beliefs and practices. It is hoped that this format allowed participants to define schematic values without being too closely directed by myself, the researcher.

During the initial contact and interview process, it was suggested by one interview participant that I contact one of the early founders of the group who currently practiced with the Denver Zen community. I contacted this individual via email and conducted a phone interview, asking the same sort of questions posed to the current Eyes of Compassion members. This discussion also involved questions on the Zen tradition as practiced by the Denver community, as I did not have an in-depth understanding of this community. I feel this interview, like the earlier interview and surveys conducted amongst Shambhala community members, offered an avenue for broader analysis and comparisons within the Denver-metro Buddhist communities. Since this member was also a participant in the Eyes of Compassion group in previous years, the interview also provided a connecting thread to another manifestation of Buddhism in the Denver community.

Interview subjects were coded with a simple lettering system designed to protect subject anonymity. Each participant was assigned letters A-J randomly, with a unique letter representing an individual participant. In the Analysis section, quotations will be attributed to participants utilizing the following Participant Reference letters:

**Table 1: Participant Chart**

<b>Participant Coding</b>	
Participant A	Female
Participant B	Female
Participant C	Male
Participant D	Female
Participant E	Female
Participant F	Female (Zen practitioner)
Participant G	Female
Participant H	Male
Participant I	Male (Shambhala Participant)
Participant J	Male

Following these in-depth personal interviews, a survey was devised utilizing topics of interest identified during the open-ended interviews. The majority of these questions were close-ended with simple Yes/No answers (although many survey participants extended these short answers with their own thoughts and ideas.) This survey was presented again to the listserv, and fifteen sangha members replied to this survey, providing answers via email. The original survey is presented as Appendix A to this document. The survey was designed to gather statistical data that was used to either support or refute assumptions developed during the interview phase of the research. This survey was also used to collect some general statistical data that could be used to analyze trends within the community, such as the percentage of those in the community who



participate in recycling programs. Surveys were not coded with regards to participant names since surveys were not used in isolation but rather to garner group data.

To compare data collected in the surveys (and incorporated data from the interviews conducted) research into current statistics involving recycling and vegetarianism was conducted. Most of the household recycling data was gathered from sources that cite studies by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency or polling organizations, with many being presentations of the data by local news sources such as television news programs or newspapers. Statistics for vegetarianism were more difficult to determine, however the Vegetarian Resource Group ([www.vrg.org](http://www.vrg.org)) conducted yearly surveys regarding vegetarian eating habits within the United States. This data appeared thorough and was used for comparative purposes in this paper.

## **Section 6: Theoretical Basis for Analysis within this Paper**

While many writers and examiners of Buddhism (as seen in the Literature Review section of this paper) have analyzed and theorized on Buddhism in general and Engaged Buddhism in America in particular, from Spiro's Freudian analysis of monastic communities, Weber's economic-social models of Ancient Buddhism in India, or Obeyesekere who, in some of his best-known examinations of Buddhist stories and ideas of karma, utilizes personal ideas of cross-cultural psychological analysis or Cooper who insists that the Ancient Greek-inspired of "virtue ethics" is the correct lens through which to examine Buddhist culture, perhaps the best theoretical frame for analysis for the purposes of this paper is that of a cognitive anthropological model (as informed by cognitive psychological theory as utilized in religious studies.) Informed largely by the data collection, a general description of this theoretical lens and the ways in which it will function in this paper are included in this section.

It should be noted that, while many aspects of cognitive anthropological theory are discussed and utilized by this paper, not one particular theorist's framework was adopted wholesale. This is not to be taken as a dismissal of aspects of a particular anthropologist or theorist's position, but rather due to data and structural constraints of this paper. It would be impossible to judge, for instance, the ecological sustainability of my informant's diet, habit, and consumer behavior as Roy Rappaport might suggest is necessary in his theoretical model, and likewise I was not able to capture in-depth processing models as outlined by Claudia Strauss and Naomi Quinn. However, given the short length of this examination and relatively small data set present (the Eyes of Compassion is not an extremely large group); an examination utilizing selected ideas and methods of analysis from various cognitive psychological and anthropological sources shall be utilized. The selected theoretical ideas utilized are presented in this section to

form what might be considered an "operational theoretical model" for the analysis of data in this paper.

As Daniel N. McIntosh (Professor of Psychology at the University of Denver) notes, religious and belief systems such as Buddhism are far broader than texts, symbols, traditions, and doctrinal statements, while at the same time narrower than an individual's habits and rites. For McIntosh, finding a way to conceptualize a system such as Buddhism is to examine how beliefs function and are organized in an individual's general interactions, which McIntosh states has "heuristic value and serves to explain some of the psychological reality of what religion is and how it functions in people's lives" (McIntosh 1997: 171). McIntosh posits this examination of the interaction between stated beliefs and how they actively function as "cognitive schema."

In McIntosh's definition, a schema is a mental representation that organizes knowledge garnered through experience and includes specification of the relations within that knowledge. Schemas are created through encounters with an individual's particular cultural environment, and can be modified based on subsequent experiences (McIntosh 1997: 172). Schemas operate at different levels of specificity, and smaller schemas can be embedded within these larger ones. McIntosh offers an example of a broad schema, "a God schema" for instance, that would function as a large, abstract cognitive schema for an individual. Within this schema, smaller schematic models for individual morality, perceptions on death and the afterlife, and what constitutes "sin" or wrongdoing might be created to inform and shape the definition of the broader, more abstract "God schema." McIntosh suggests that understanding these "lower-level schema" that make up the more abstract ones can "help us understand more about abstract-level schema, such as religion" because "schematic processing appears to occur in approximately the same fashion at each level of abstraction" (McIntosh 1997: 172). McIntosh further notes that schema influence what is perceived by individuals. Things that are given a particular schema or held within a

schema are noticed by individuals, and things that are without schema or fall outside a particularly held schematic model are ignored (Neisser 1976).

While McIntosh offers an idea on how one might anthropologically examine a concept such as "religion" and how it is cognitively structured within an individual, Roy Rappaport (who is not typically associated with Cognitive Anthropology theorists, but shall be included here as some of his theoretical positioning might provide illumination on this topic) offers a similar (yet distinctly different in many ways) theory on how concepts are cognized that can perhaps add to McIntosh's theoretical proposition. While Roy Rappaport tends to a cultural materialistic perspective in the majority of his works (for instance, examining caloric intake amongst a community and how that shapes the particular group's engagement of their environment), he also offers some concepts that can be helpful in this examination. In particular, Rappaport's definitions (if not actualized postulations) of a "cognized model" prove helpful in the discussion of the Eyes of Compassion Sangha and their beliefs regarding and engagement with issues of ecology. For Rappaport, a cognized model is "a description of people's knowledge of their environment and of their beliefs concerning it" (Bowie 2000: 121). Rappaport suggests that such cognized models are built of "reference values" which are culturally specific constructed models of how the world works and how relationships within that world should operate. While Rappaport in his work takes these ideas in a different direction than cognitive anthropologists such as D'Andrade and Rappaport, in his later works, suggested that these models are useful for examining how individual cultural members (and ultimately a cultural group) conceive their world and thereby act within it. A cognized model, for Rappaport, Rappaport also defines "reference values," which he suggests work within the particular cognized models of individuals, and are "the culturally determined notions of how things should be" (Bowie 2000: 171). These values are encoded within the cognized model, but different levels of worth are assigned to different "value."

Rappaport gives an example of a cognized model and the reference values therein by describing what he sees as occurring in industrialized Western culture. He suggests that the cognized model of the Western population in general (which has as governing systems things such as the IMF and World Bank) places primacy on economics as the key that shapes the reference values found within this cognized model. Rappaport suggests that, through the lens of this cognized model, actors place value on things that are seen as "resources," lesser value on those that are deemed neutrally useless, and places negative value on those that are seen as "pests" or competitors to the "resources."

While Rappaport's application of these theoretical postulates may not be identical to those of the analysis presented herein, this idea of "cognized models" and "reference values" does prove illuminating when discussing the ways in which the Eyes of Compassion talk about and engage with the idea of "the environment." For Rappaport, humans act in their environment (or on their environment) in ways that are influenced by systems such as religious views. Their interactions with the environment are shaped not strictly by rational, scientific understandings (what Rappaport deems "Operational Reality") but instead are shaped and informed by the reference values held within a particular cognized model. For the sake of this discussion, Rappaport's suggestion that "nature is seen by humans through a screen of beliefs, knowledge, and purposes, and it is in terms of nature, rather than the actual structure of nature, that they act" (Bowie 2000: 171) is the central aspect of the theory presented by Rappaport that will be utilized herein, and his discussions of "operational reality" and the ways in which ecological realities (such as food consumption and calorie count) impact the cognized models of individuals within a culture will not, as they do not fit with the theoretical argument and data set being offered in this paper.

While both McIntosh and Rappaport offer examples of how a schema or cognitive model might function within the mind of an individual, there is little discussion on how such a model or schematic structure might cause an individual to *act*. As Roy D'Andrade says in his influential book The Development of Cognitive Theory in Anthropology, the issue of explaining just why an individual takes a particular set of actions has been a notoriously problematic one within the discipline of Anthropology. He suggests that most theoretical models simply assert that "action is culturally constructed" but does not delve into the mechanics of why such action patterns would be constructed by said culture (D'Andrade 1995: 234). For D'Andrade, a development of a cognitive schema model could offer anthropologists an idea of how not only ideas functioned for cultural group members, but also how these ideas prompted or precluded specific action sets. Much of anthropological theory and discussion construes culture in a strictly materialist or symbolic structure, assuming that a "culture" was made up of shared behaviors, symbols, and customs, but in his utilization of cognitive models and schema theory, D'Andrade suggests that culture is in fact shared ideas that might motivate and stimulate similar actions within a cultural group. In his work, D'Andrade takes the same basic assumptions of what constitutes a schema and cognitive model as McIntosh (who was explaining cognitive models from a strictly religious psychological framework) and expands upon them to include how these psychological constructs are activated to instigate action by cultural members.

Within D'Andrade theoretical model, a schema functions as more than just a recognition device. In D'Andrade's presentation of cognitive anthropological theory, different levels of deeply interrelated schema exist (similar to what Rappaport suggests with his idea of "reference values") that offer different levels of motivational factors. D'Andrade describes "master schema" which are abstract and generally an individual's most general goals, such as a want of love, security, or play. These are major interpretive schema; these top-level schematic groups build the basic motivational foundation for an individual's cognitive model, as all other schemas will relate

back to these central, abstract goals in some way. "Mid-range schema" are powerful goals (such as concepts of marriage or jobs) that are not totally autonomous as they are a means to the more ultimate master schema goals. Finally "bottom-level schema," which are typically tasks and activities that are relegated as "mundane" (such as writing a memo, or going to the bank, or throwing out a piece of trash) and are wholly dependent on the higher-level schema as a motivational force (these in some ways could be satisfactorily compared to Shore's "social scripts," which are schema that offer codified directions for action in a particular social setting or daily encounter). The master schema are motivators for action at lower, daily levels. In D'Andrade's description, for instance, a person's master schema of security will influence the mid-level schema of working a job, as the person's idea of what a "job" entails and (more to the point) what a "good job" entails relates back to the idea of how one might obtain what one ultimately deems "security." Going to the bank might be a minor schematic function as this bottom-level style "task" is linked to the higher schema of finances and ultimately the feeling of and need for security found in the highest level of schema (D'Andrade 1995: 232-233).

One important aspect of schema (as posited by D'Andrade) within the context of anthropology is that, while different individuals can have schema (produced out of individual experience) and even varying master schema that vary slightly from others in the culture, key culturally-informed schema will be held with some degree of commonality across that particular cultural group. D'Andrade suggests that, methodologically, one can develop a complete paradigm (a complex matrix) that allows for an understanding of how these general or master schema relate to one another and then how these intermingled (or solitary) master schemas inform mid-range and bottom-level schema. Through developing a culturally-held paradigm, an anthropologist can better understand what constitutes a shared schematic structure (i.e., what makes up "culture" in D'Andrade's cognitive theoretical view).

How these schema impart motivational force is examined by Holly Mathews as she examines folk tales in Zapotec-Mixtec communities. As Claudia Strauss states, "motivation is not automatically acquired from cultural descriptions of reality" (Strauss 1992: 13). While actions may not spring solely from shared cultural schemas, Holly Mathews investigates the ways in which such schemas develop motivational force. Looking at the ways in which individual women and men in the community discussed particular folk tales, Mathews suggests that stories, narratives, and teachings serve to not only assist in the construction of schemas for individuals, but also re-asserts the schemas for group members by making them seem natural by imparting a sense of inevitability from a certain sequence of activities. In hearing and embodying these culturally informed stories and teachings, group members are more likely to adopt a schematic view that certain actions and values are "natural" and expected, which in turn feeds adoption of the abstract schemas in a culture as it asserts their naturalness and rightness. Understanding cultural schemas make the narratives, stories, and teachings make sense, whereas these same stories and teachings serve to enforce the accommodation of the cultural schema model for individual group members. "Learning these models in turn makes the sequence of events depicted in these tales seem inevitable and its moral convincing, a circularity that is common in cultural acquisition" (Strauss 1992: 14).

Different levels of accommodation can lead to different ways of acting. While different individuals certainly have different backgrounds that shape their degree of accommodating the Master level schema present within a culture, the more an individual feels an emotional resonance with the cultural teachings, narratives, and processes informed by these Master level schema, the more likely the chance of accommodation (Strauss 1992: 14).

Through a utilization of cognitive schema theory as delineated by these many writers, I hope to develop a cultural model for the particular group researched. Developing a cultural



model based out of this understanding of schemas as motivators and influencers of actions may provide an interesting lens through which to consider both individual group member assumptions and engagement of issues of climate change. Understanding the relationship between Eyes of Compassion members and the issue of climate change through the lens of cognitive schema theory can assist in understanding firstly assumptions on this issue made by group members, how such schema function, how these assumptions motivate other schemas, and ultimately how they are enacted. Likewise, examining how narratives, teachings, sayings, guidelines, and readings offered within the weekly sangha group sessions may show how the different levels of schema are reinforced and accommodated by individual members. Finally, examining how the varied abstract levels of schema are put into daily practice can reveal just how accommodated the entire schematic model might be within group members.

This use of schematic modeling has been used by researchers to develop understandings of how group members address environmental issues in other culture groups. In a 2000 paper, Michael Paolisso, R. Shawn Maloney, and Erve Chambers noted that a cultural model “constructed by an interplay of knowledge, beliefs and values” can allow for “the use of a ‘cultural models’ approach to addressing environmental concerns such as natural resource degradation, pollution, and conservation of biodiversity.” This is what is hoped to be accomplished within this paper, although with environmental concerns mainly limited to climate change issues.

As McIntosh points out, "religion is more than a cognitive schema, but thinking about it as such provides useful ways to analyze these relationships and to understand religious beliefs themselves" (McIntosh 2000: 183). While the sort of Buddhism as practiced by the Eyes of Compassion might not be considered a religion per se, it does constitute an important belief philosophy for the participants that act in much the same ways as religious belief systems

described by McIntosh. Due to this, for the sake of this paper, the idea of conceptualizing the Eyes of Compassion belief system and its particular views of climate change, environment, and other ecological issues shall be pursued.

## Section 7: Analysis

In 2009, Annie Jia of ClimateWire wrote an article for the New York Times entitled "How Understanding the Human Mind Might Save the World From CO2." In the article, Jia notes that one of the common assumptions amongst activist groups and environmental educators is that informing people of climate change issues is the key to changing their behavior. In study conducted during the 1970s, however, researchers at Virginia Polytechnic institute found that, after offering participants an intensive workshop on issues of climate change (after which participants reported a significant upswing in concern and knowledge), the actions of participants (such as lower temperature on water heaters or installing low-flow shower heads) did not see a significant increase. This, says Jia, points to the idea that "thinking does not equal doing" when it comes to understanding and addressing climate change (Jia 2009).

This begs the question: While education and information alone might not lead to actionable change by individuals, how might knowing lead to acting if it is embedded in a cultural model? While the researchers of the 1970s study may have found their informational seminar did not result in lasting effects, a deeply-seated cultural model for viewing and addressing climate change may see a completely different result. In looking at the practitioners of the Eyes of Compassion, for example, a cultural model that conceptualized issues of climate change as integrated with major, motivating schemas does in fact seem to produce results in the individual practitioner's activities with regards to climate change issues.

Examiners of Buddhism in the past, such as Spiro, Ames, and Durkheim (as mentioned in the literature review) viewed Buddhist mind-set and ideology as one that resisted or rejected the world. Focus was on personal salvation, and these writers suggested that canonical Buddhist teachings emphasized that, at least for monastics, such salvation came only with a disengagement

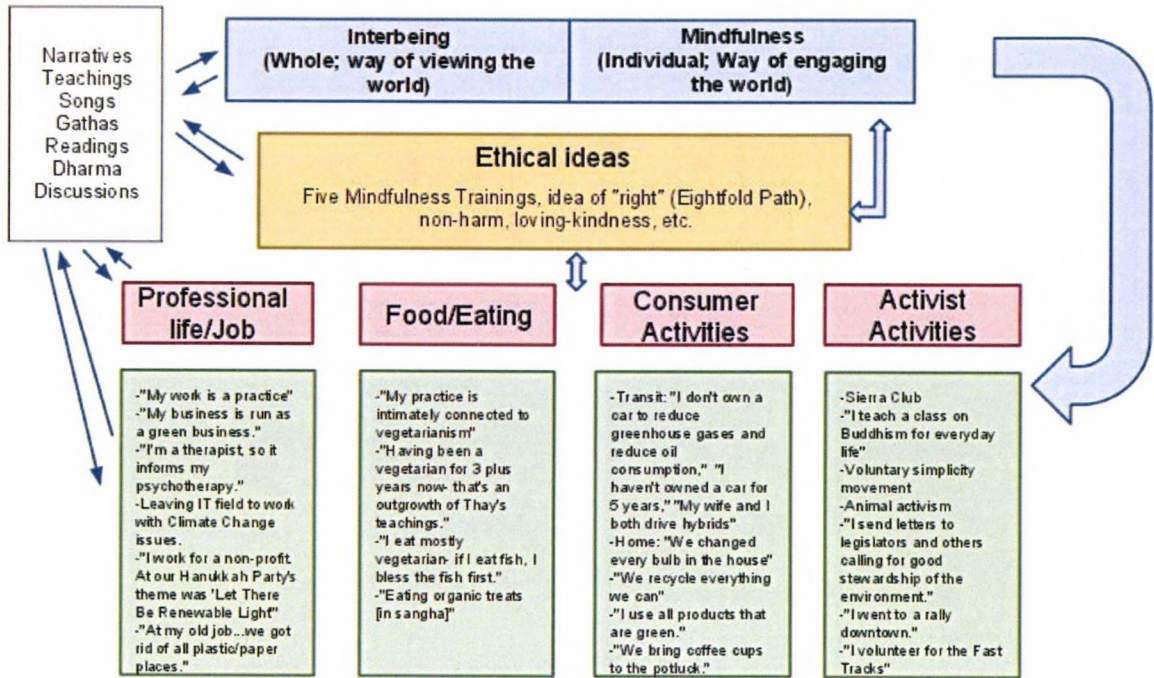
from worldly concerns, emotions, and sometimes even activities (such as Spiro says when he examines monastics who reject being part of production, physical and emotional relationships, and consumption outside of their proscribed daily intake of food). While Gombrich's and Obeyesekere's examinations suggested that the lay Buddhists of Sri Lanka post-Dharmapala sought to involve Buddhist values and ideals into daily life, these ideals were still proscribed by the teacher and emphasized daily cleanliness and economic activities designed to foster social class change or promotion. These ideas of Buddhism may have been true in the particular time and place in which they were developed, but within the Eyes of Compassion (and more broadly the Buddhist community of the West), the idea of "Engaged Buddhism" has become a new paradigm for enacting and considering what Buddhism is to practitioners of the tradition as well as how it is involved in shaping how individual adoptees of Engaged Buddhism utilize ideas and themes presented in the tradition in ways that shape both their cultural community and their lives.

For understanding first perceptions amongst the Eyes of Compassion practitioners (who, for the most part, would identify as coming from a tradition of Engaged Buddhism) and how these perceptions motivate behaviors, it is necessary to develop a cultural model (ala D'Andrade, Strauss, and Quinn), as based on the interviews, informal discussions, surveys, and observational information gathered from the Eyes of Compassion members. While this cultural model is surely not a comprehensive picture, as issues such as how much other American societal values or differing faith values influence particular members or perhaps shape the cultural model, I feel this developed model will produce an interesting picture of how these particular group members conceptualize, process, and engage with issues of climate change. By first developing an idea of what the Master Motivating Schema are within the Eyes of Compassion cultural group, a picture of mid-level schematic values and ideas can be understood, followed by lower-level activities. Examinations shall not therefore be limited to broad, abstract ideas as discussed by Eyes of

Compassion members, but also daily mundane activities (such as garbage disposal) through which a clearer understanding of how the upper-level schemas function. This is possible, as McIntosh posits, as "schematic processing appears to occur in approximately the same fashion at each level of abstraction [and therefore] knowledge about the functioning of lower-level schema can help us understand more abstract-level schema" (McIntosh 1997: 172).

To develop a cultural model of how the members of Eyes of Compassion might conceptualize and engage with issues of climate change, it was first essential to identify what D'Andrade calls "Master schemas" or "Master motivators." As described in the previous chapter, these abstract concepts form the root of thinking for individuals, and serve as broad-level motivators for mid-range schema and lower-level schema. These are usually agreed-upon assumptions that serve as major shapers and motivators for schema that are perhaps not quite as abstract. These master level abstractions are held more-or-less communally by cultural group members, making them unifying structural schema. By teasing out these abstract master schemas, a cultural model (based on similarity of schema at this level) can be developed. A conceptualization of this model is found in Figure 1 on the following page:

Figure 1: Cultural Model



In the following analysis, the different levels of this model shall be examined. Evidence pulled from observations made of sangha narratives (as found in the group meetings), dharma discussions, interviews, and surveys shall be presented to demonstrate how these various sources helped develop this model.

### **Descriptions of the "Practice" by Group Members**

When asked to describe their practice, many participants first described their meditation activities and frequency in which they attended Sangha. Only one participant (Participant D) in the interviews said they had difficulty maintaining a meditation schedule outside of formal Sangha meetings, but all others emphasized a routine meditation practice in their own homes, with most noting a daily sitting practice. One participant noted that he tried to sit twice a day, with 45 minute sessions in the morning and evening. Likewise, eight of the 15 survey respondents indicated that they attended Sangha approximately three times a month or more (Sangha is not held the first week of the month, so most of the year meetings are held three to four times a month). Participant D noted that she was a weekly attendee until a recent move out of the country removed her from participation. One interview subject referred to this sitting and Sangha attendance as her "formal practice." This indicates that the interviewed members on the majority had a high daily commitment to meditation and focused at least once a day on a Buddhist-centered activity such as insight or mindfulness meditation or Sangha attendance. When examining the development of cultural models, this level of participation seems to suggest that the majority of the interviewees in particular are highly involved participants in the community, and this might indicate that the influences of the Eyes of Compassion Buddhist cultural model would be referenced daily as well.

### **Mindfulness: A Main Motivating Schema for Engaging the World**

When discussing meditation, the idea of "mindfulness" seemed to be a key theme in how participants described their understanding of meditation (even the bell rung during the meditation sessions was often referred to as the "mindfulness bell".) Mindfulness is often referenced in canonical Buddhism as well as in many of the ancient Asian traditions as one of the "tent pole" concepts. The Anapanapanasati Sutra, for instance, gives directions for exercises on many kinds of activities and directives to "be mindful" while doing them. These include mindful breathing, in which the meditator is encouraged to utilize breathing techniques to shift mental, emotional, and physical attention to certain aspects of the self and beyond; for instance, step one of the sutra is to draw awareness and be "mindful" of the body, followed by "mindful" awareness and focus on mental objects, and so on (Nhat Hanh 2009: 11). "Mindfulness" within the Buddhist context is not simply limited to thinking about something or shifting mental attention to an object or body function, but rather encompasses a broad range of experiential, mental (both conscious and unconscious), emotional, and physical attentions towards any number of things. Mindfulness, in many conceptualizations in Buddhist literature, is a vital tool for developing Buddhist ethical ideals (such as overcoming attachment, addressing and diminishing concepts of the ego-self, gaining wisdom, and developing compassion) as well as is an ethical ideal in and of itself.

As the participant above noted, meditation provided him a time to develop a deeper sense of "mindfulness." Mindfulness as a concept stands as one of the tent-poles of both Buddhist canonical thinking but particularly in the adapted Western Engaged Buddhist thinking. Thich Nhat Hanh particularly appears to focus on this concept, with books such as *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, *Present Moment, Wonderful Moment: Mindfulness Verses for Daily Living*, *Mindful Movement*, *Peace in Every Step: A Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life*, *Happiness: Essential Mindfulness Practices*, and *The Art of Mindful Living*. In the book *Moment by Moment: The Art and Practice of Mindfulness* (which has a forward written by Thich Nhat Hanh himself), Jerry Baza offers several definitions of mindfulness: Thich Nhat Hanh's description that posits



"Mindfulness refers to keeping one's consciousness alive to the present reality," or Ellen Langer's idea of "Mindfulness [as] a state in which one is open to creating new categories, open to new information, and being aware of more than one perspective." Baza himself writes that Mindfulness is "the art and practice of becoming fully aware of each moment and one's experience of that moment" (Baza 1997: xxiii, 1). Mindfulness, in these writers' and teachers' perspective, involves intimate, personal awareness of all facets of reality, without getting too caught up in the "big picture" (Baza 1997: 1). The concept of mindfulness likewise forms the basis of the mission statement for the Colorado Community of Mindful Living (CCML), a network in which the Eyes of Compassion sangha is a part. As seen in the mission statement referenced in the Background section of this paper, the CCML explicitly denoted mindfulness as a key theme for their sangha network: "We intend to promote *mindfulness* on all levels of society. These objectives are to be furthered through the establishment of *mindfulness* sanghas."

The narratives and teachings present during the Eyes of Compassion sangha session and dharma discussions appear to reaffirm this imagining of mindfulness. As noted in the Background section of this paper, sangha sessions are opened with a chant, which is sung by sangha members prior to the guided meditation portion. One of the lines in the opening chant advises mediators to allow "body and mind dwell in perfect Mindfulness." The guided meditation session immediately following the opening chants is designed to allow participants to hear short gathas offered by the group leader which often carry a theme of Mindfulness, such as Thich Nhat Hanh's short meditation gatha "breathing in: I know I am breathing in. Breathing out: I know I am breathing out." As described in materials provided to the voluntary sangha leader, these gathas are intended to offer a chance for meditators to break the stream of thoughts that often develop during silent meditative periods, allowing them first to focus and consider the ideas offered in the short gatha, and then return with renewed focus to their breathing. After the mindfulness bell has been rung, the group leader often reads aloud from the sangha-provided

description of walking meditation, which encourages "Mindfulness in every step." Some leaders have taken the introductory period of the walking session to speak to their own experiences with bringing Mindfulness to the feet, and being mindful of each foot fall on the ground. At the end of the session, tea and cookies are offered, but before they are consumed in silence (in what is termed the Mindful Eating Practice in sangha leader literature), the group is read Thich Nhat Hanh's "Five Contemplations" before eating. These Five Contemplations again call attention to Mindfulness with the line: "May we eat in Mindfulness and gratitude so as to be worthy to receive it." After an open-sharing dharma discussion period, a "Sharing of the Merit" chant is offered, in which meditators vow to share their meditative efforts with "all beings." Mindfulness again is referenced as the song starts: "Reciting the sutras, practicing the way of Awareness, Gives rise to Mindfulness without limits."

As apparent from the direct references made in the various parts of the Sangha meeting, Mindfulness is a major theme in the Eyes of Compassion Sangha meditative session. Reminders to be Mindful are often offered by the member who serves as the leader, and often readings on Mindfulness will also be offered at the opening of the dharma discussion period. This emphasis on cultivating Mindfulness during meditative ("Formal practice") sessions was emphasized by interview members as well as they referenced their own personal meditative sessions. "From a functional standpoint, my practice is daily meditation and development of my awareness and my mindfulness in regards to my thinking and views on the world," offered Participant A when asked to describe his practice. While other members mostly described their years in the Sangha or daily sitting routines, many later mentioned Mindfulness in meditation during other question segments.

Beyond the description of their meditation sessions and the way in which meditation was perceived to function for the participants, many of the interview subjects emphasized that their Buddhist practice extended beyond just sitting meditation and was in fact a broad-spectrum

structure that they felt impacted their daily lives and activities. This is not to suggest that sitting practice was designated within the Eyes of Compassion group as a means to blocking out the world or isolating one's thoughts from daily activities: Indeed, as noted often during meditation sessions at the Sangha, sitting practice was viewed as a tool to "opening up the mind" (à la Ellen Langer in the previous quote defining Mindfulness) to allow participants to notice thought patterns and emotions. As Participant D noted, the meditation was a key to allowing time to think and consider daily activities and how the practice might be involved in daily life.

This idea of Mindfulness as involved in daily life was one mentioned by several interview participants as well as a near-constant theme in the open-sharing dharma discussions during Sangha meetings. When asked to describe their practice, six of the participants directly noted that it involved utilizing Buddhist ideas in "daily life" (sometimes encouraged in Thich Nhat Hanh's strain of Engaged Buddhism in particular). While meditative sitting and Sangha attendance were considered by at least one member a "formal practice," references to daily activity Mindfulness could be seen as "informal practice." This does not suggest that one form of "Mindfulness training" (as the practice path pursued in the Eyes of Compassion was often called in dharma discussions) is greater than the other; indeed, many interview participants placed greater conversational emphasis on the Mindfulness of everyday life over formal sitting.

Mindfulness as a life practice involves participants taking a similar conceptualization of being aware and conscious of each thought, movement, emotion, idea, and physical sensation (amongst other things). "I'm mindful in daily tasks," said Participant A of her efforts to continue her practice in what she termed "informal" settings. When asked to describe "Engaged Buddhism" as emphasized within the sangha teachings, for instance, Participant E echoed the idea that the formal practice was not the limit to cultivation and utilization of Mindfulness trainings. "It's being involved in issues that are bigger than just sitting practice," she noted of the Engaged

Buddhist idea. In both discussions of the formal and informal practice (and discussions on Engaged Buddhism more generally), the interview subjects' answers indicated that Mindfulness was the focus of the meditative sessions, and out of this main concept many different understandings, actions, and ideas sprung.

Mindfulness was often referenced when participants were asked to identify what they viewed as their "ecological values" or "environmental ethics." As Kenneth Kraft, a frequent scholarly writer on Western Engaged Buddhism suggests, "for the contemporary Buddhists a deepening sense of relation with nature is usually associated with a spirit of *engagement*," or in other words, mindfulness (Kraft 1994: 179). As Participant F (who currently formally practices with the Denver Zen group but served as one of the founding members of the Eyes of Compassion Sangha) said when describing her beliefs in regards to the environment, "Mindfulness is very important to making the changes we need. I learn to see my thoughts arise, I say I feel that pull by something, and I recognize that pull. It's a way to then make the choice... clear." "My informal practice is mindfulness in daily tasks," noted Participant A. "Sometimes, it's an unpleasant feeling, that constant awareness of consumption. I think about almost every move I make." It appears, therefore, that Mindfulness may be viewed as a Master level schema for *how an individual uniquely engages the world* within the Eyes of Compassion group members that serves as a top-down motivator for other ethics, concepts, ideas, and ultimately daily mundane activities, particularly in regards to environmental issues such as climate change.

### **Interbeing: Main Motivating Schema of Viewing the World**

This master motivating schema was not the only oft-repeated concept frequently referenced by Sangha members. When discussion shifted to questions of environment, ecology, and climate change, one concept appeared in the majority of interviewee responses as well as saw frequent mention in dharma discussion sharing. When asked to describe their ecological ethics

(again, a broad question that allowed participants to describe the concept on their own terms), "Interconnectedness" or "interbeing" consistently appeared in discussion. These two terms were used seemingly interchangeably by Sangha participants, both in interviews and in group meetings; while there may be canonical or theoretical differences in the two terms in Buddhist philosophy in general, due to the messages received from participants themselves during the course of this research, the two terms will be assumed to hold the same meaning. This concept of interconnection was often repeated in interviews when subjects were asked to describe "Engaged Buddhism" as it was practiced by themselves and in the Sangha. In an article by Patricia Hunt-Perry and Lynn Fine on the subject of Engaged Buddhism, the authors note that the very foundations "of Thich Nhat Hanh's work with environmentalists... and other social change activists are the traditional Buddhist teachings on interbeing and impermanence" (Hunt-Perry, Fine 2000: 52). As Stephanie Kaza ((Associate Professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Vermont) notes in her essay "To Save All Beings," Mindfulness practice is "a natural support of Buddhist environmentalism, [and] can take a range of forms." This idea that mindfulness is foundational for Buddhist ways of considering ecological issues such as climate change certainly seems to be the case when examining interview data, Sangha discussions, and important foundational teachings (such as the Mindfulness trainings) that form a central part of the Sangha's formal session.

In the Sangha meetings themselves, the concept of interconnectedness appeared in several key chants and trainings recited during the meeting format. Prior to eating of snacks and drinking of tea, the group leader would read aloud the Five Contemplations, the first of which reminds participants to consider that "this food is the gift of the whole universe- the earth, the sky, and much hard work." Likewise, an opening song entitled "No Coming, No Going" that is often requested by Sangha participants includes the lines: "I hold you close to me/ I release you to be so free/ Because I am in you/ And you are in me." Another song, "Here is the Pureland" has

the verses: "The Buddha is seen in the autumn leaf... The Sangha body is everywhere." Coupled with readings from Thich Nhat Hanh and writers such as Jack Kornfield, who in his book *The Ecstasy After the Laundry*, a book out of which passages were read by the group leader for that month during one dharma discussion (which was praised by several members during that meetings as well, suggests that "Awakening to oneness, we discover that we have the same last name as the mountains, the streams, and the redwood trees. A full experience of this truth is called "satori"- the first taste of enlightenment." Similar nature imagery and references to connection and co-mingling of essence with natural phenomenon as found in Kornfield's passage were popular subjects of gathas offered during several of the guided meditation sessions as well, with phrases such as "Breathing in, I am a flower," being recited for practitioners to contemplate and consider.

Being reminded of interconnectedness with nature provided a large foundation from which many participants addressed the open-ended discussion of their ecological viewpoints and ethics. "If I'm outdoors, I sense that connectedness more," said Participant C. "It reinforces my practice." He went on to note that "We learn interconnectedness" from such his environmental engagement. "The two things go naturally hand in hand," he said. Another participant, Participant H, noted that his practice of Buddhist practice has "torn down the wall between myself and the environment. It helps me to see the interrelation is so strong. When I first started, I heard They talk about minerals and I was like "what?" But the minerals- we can't exist without the minerals. We're talking about ourselves on the basic level."

These two "big picture" ideas were discussed often in the Sangha meetings and discussion periods, as well as reinforced by Sangha songs, chants, gathas, narratives, and readings. The mention of these two major themes seems to suggest that they provide an underlying value message that shapes the way the Eyes of Compassion practitioners (and perhaps

many Buddhists in a similar tradition) in their conceptualization and actions regarding climate change issues. As seen in not only the observations of regular Sangha activities, Sangha member's discussions, and data gathered from interviews with Sangha members, these two ideas appeared to form the core base around which group members further conceptualized their activities and daily engagements with climate change issues.

### **Main Motivating Schema: How Mindfulness and Interconnectedness Operate as Key Concepts for Practitioners in the Eyes of Compassion**

It can be therefore suggested that interconnectedness (the multi-faceted connectedness or potential "buddha nature" of all beings, processes, and items in existence; the way of viewing the world as whole) and mindfulness (the individual development of deep and conscious awareness and thoughtfulness; the way in which a practitioner might individually engage the whole of the world) therefore appear to make up the two main Master schema (as posited by D'Andrade) of Eyes of Compassion practitioners. It must be noted that these master schema do not exist as *apriori* concepts that exist separate from the rest of the cultural values and conceptualizations. They are informed, created, and reinforced through group interactions (such as the dharma discussions, leader reading choices, teacher speeches, and informal talk amongst group members) as well as activities (offering organic treats and teas, utilizing reusable tea mugs) and statements present in very mission statement of the CCML-associated Eyes of Compassion group, and especially during talks and lessons by highly-regarded teachers (such as Thich Nhat Hanh) that direct and shape the ways in which the members of the group understand and view their own practices. As seen in the above discussions, these two concepts are frequently referenced and reinforced in the sangha group and repeated by sangha members in the interviews, suggesting that they are powerful, learned themes in this particular cultural group. It should also be noted that these two concepts may not be the whole of the master schema for the group; however, Buddhist

practice as experienced by Eyes of Compassion members in regards to issues of climate change seems to be localized around these two major schematic themes.

Mindfulness and interconnectedness appear to serve as main linchpins for thinking about environmental and climate change issues in particular. Members certainly did not mention these two concepts in isolation in their ways of considering the environment, but these two main schema did appear to influence the ways in which other schema were conceptualized and ultimately enacted. Without ideas of *interconnectedness* establishing the way the Eyes of Compassion practitioners viewed all of existence as a whole, and *mindfulness* offering the main abstraction of how to engage with the world, subsequent ideas could not be seen as operating effectively. As Padma de Silva, an environmental educator who wrote the book *Environmental Philosophy and Ethics in Buddhism*, notes that "the development of environmental ethics... in the Buddhist context is not merely collecting an amalgam of rules, prescriptions, and theories, but involves more: That is, a way of 'perceiving the environment' or 'seeing the world.' When interbeing and mindfulness create the schematic framework of how the practitioner "sees the world," the precepts, ethical ideas, and other cultural concepts can be seen as generating from this foundational framework. Thich Nhat Hanh himself suggests that the more abstract level schema activate the ethical directives found as Mid-range schema when he notes that "in the Buddhist tradition, Buddha resides in us as energy- the energy of mindfulness, the energy of concentration, the energy of insight- that will bring about understanding, compassion, love, joy, togetherness and non-discrimination" (Nhat Hanh 2008: 15).

To give an example of how interconnectedness and mindfulness might duly inform how other concepts (the mid-range schema) present amongst many of the Eyes of Compassion practitioners, one ethic-laden proscriptive shall be examined. Take for instance, the idea of "non-harm," which was frequently mentioned by both interview participants and in open discussion



during sangha meetings. In the book *Mindfully Green*, Kaza posits that the Buddhist ethical value of reducing harm to all living things or causing no harm (the first Mindfulness Training as presented by Thich Nhat Hanh) serves as a foundational ethic for Buddhist environmental action. While this ethical imperative is certainly a key factor in the ways Buddhists may structure their actions with regards to addressing climate change, it is ultimately informed and motivated by the schema of interconnectedness and mindfulness. In this case, interconnectedness serves as a schema that recognizes the union of and therefore inherent value of all things in existence; the practitioner is not an isolated self, and intrinsic value is not localized to the individual practitioner. Without the conceptualization that all living and non-animate worldly things are connected in their worth and value, the value of non-harm might not be as salient an ethic. To understand that "life is suffering" (The First Noble Truth, one of the key foundational tenants of Buddhism) and to understand that this idea of "life" interconnects the existence of all things in existence in this reality, provides a motivator and deeper basis for the objective "do no harm." All beings are interconnected and capable of suffering just as the individual practitioner suffers, and as the practitioner would not care to suffer, so should other beings be spared this pain.

However, while interconnectedness provides the way in which a practitioner might think about the concept of what and why things (such as the earth and its many living beings are conceived to be harmed by climate change) should not be harmed, mindfulness provides the tool that allows practitioners to consider and actively try to cause no harm. Firstly, Buddhist writers conceive that mindfulness allows for an active engagement with the idea of interconnectedness: As Kornfield suggests, it is through the careful engagement of all things and awareness to these things (both external and internal to the practitioner) that interconnectedness is first recognized in a moment of "sati." When this engagement of the world is undertaken, careful, wise, and informed understandings of this interconnectedness can be made. While the world may be interconnected, mindfulness practices and trainings are the first step (as Kornfield posits) towards

personally accepting and understanding the framework of interconnectedness. While it may seem as if mindfulness is an aggregate of interconnectedness, as Kornfield's statement seems to suggest, for in the individual, mindfulness serves as the way in which an individual engages with and comes to understand and appreciate the idea of interconnectedness. As Kenneth Kraft notes, cultural activities within groups such as recitations of gathas provide "'mindfulness verses' that also function as reminders of our interconnectedness" (Kraft 2009: 3). Mindfulness can therefore be seen as the individual aspect of this framework that assists with and is likewise informed by the knowledge of the world as interconnected. The two may be deeply intermingled and may inform one another, but are both Master schema in that they allow for conceptualization of the world itself and how this world is actively engaged by individuals.

Mindfulness and interconnectedness not only built the ways in which individuals could address the climate crisis, but also more broadly utilized this schema as a way of thinking about reasons the climate crisis originated and continued. Understanding this schema is essential to understanding how the cultural group members that make up the Eyes of Compassion think about the origins and ongoing contributors to the climate change crisis. As evidenced via interviews and from observations conducted during the time at the Eyes of Compassion meditation sessions, participants strongly believed that climate change issues were the result of human actions. "Humans are doing a lot to this planet we call home," said Participant B during an interview session. Participant C said he felt the climate change was, he noted,

"Part of a larger issue that all connects to mindful awareness. As a culture, we're not particularly aware or mindful. The corporatization of it all... All these things work together to conceal the facts that we're not visitors to nature- we are nature. It's all related to greed- related to lack of mindfulness."

## **Mid-Range Schema**

When examining this developing proposed cultural model, it is possible to see that the ideas of mindfulness and interconnectedness inform other abstract-level ideas (particularly ethical precepts) which herein I will call "Mid-range schema." For further examples of how interconnectedness and mindfulness in tandem motivate and create context for the mid-range schema of ethics and ethic action, one can look to how the two master level schema inform and serve as motivators for understanding and adoption of the cultural teachings such as the Five Mindfulness Trainings (refer to the Background section of this paper for a full transcript of the Five Mindfulness Trainings) and other ethical structures mentioned within and by the group.

In an echo of the ideas presented in this schematic cultural model, Thich Nhat Hanh suggests, "The mindfulness trainings are concrete realizations of mindfulness" (Nhat Hanh 2008: 10). The Trainings, which were read out loud on the first Thursday meeting of each month at the Eyes of Compassion, Thich Nhat Hanh directs practitioners in the fifth training to bring their awareness to "unmindful consumption." "I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming." While each of the other trainings offers a similar directive, each is embedded in the idea of interconnectedness in that they come from the foundational viewpoint that the self is not a solitary actor, but personal actions and the actions of others are intermingled in a web of life. Each precept is also presented "Mindful" as a modifier for the different activities and concepts, including compassion for life, loving-kindness and working for well-being of all plants, animals, and minerals, sexual relations and other inter-personal relationships, and speaking and listening. In all these Mindfulness Trainings, the practitioner is directed to deeply consider the ways in which killing, stealing, engaging in sexual misconduct, speaking falsely, harshly, or cruelly, and consuming may be conducted "unmindfully" and then offers a vow towards Mindful action in each case. The key with the Mindfulness Trainings may be in the way

the Mindfulness segment acts as a modifier: Mindful is the underlying, overarching, and key way of engaging these ethical trainings, suggesting that Mindfulness makes the core foundation for enacting these trainings. The "moral self" (which mindfulness is supposed to develop) is therefore the loci of development for these ethical precepts.

Mid-range schemas in the Eyes of Compassion cultural model appear to make up the bulk of the ethical precepts and "rightness" valuations. These values and ethics serve to enforce the idea of what "right behavior" is for a participant. These mid-range ethic schema are particularly active in the ways in which Eyes of Compassion members both think and act on issues of climate change, since they allow the practitioners to identify what is the "right" thing to do with regards to addressing global warming issues. This idea of "rightness" (an echo from the directives to engage in "right" actions and behavior in the foundational Buddhist idea of the Eightfold Path) and the ethical guidelines established and reinforced in cultural documents such as the Five Mindfulness Trainings. This feed-back informational loop of Master-level and Mid-range schema (in this case, ethical directives, ideas of ethics, and outlines for ethical or "right" action) create a cultural group narrative that serves to inform participants of cultural values (with the Five Mindfulness Trainings giving suggestions on the "right" course of actions) that not only educate participants, but also serve to reinforce the abstract level Master schema. Much as Mathews found with her examination of cultural narratives amongst Zapotec-Mixtec populations, the more emotionally salient and "true to life" these narratives and teachings seemed, the more they reinforced the Master schema that motivate them. For the Eyes of Compassion group, these narratives come not only in the form of the Five Mindfulness Trainings, but also in dharma teachings by Thich Nhat Hanh that are watched on video or listened to on tape during Sangha sessions and Days of Mindfulness, book passages read in meetings, songs, gathas, and personal stories told by other group members during dharma discussions and study groups.

Interview participants often mentioned the Five Mindfulness Trainings, particularly when asked if they saw their environmental-themed activities change after adoption of the practice. Participant B, for instance, noted that "definitely, the Five Mindfulness Trainings on the first Thursday of the month" when discussing what particular aspects of the practice influenced her environmental ethics or climate change-oriented actions. Participant A echoed this, bringing up the Trainings when asked the same question. Participant A also noted that she felt the reading of the Trainings was a way in which the Sangha as a group addressed climate change issues, as well as the reading of the Five Contemplations before eating snacks each week at group.

### **Lower-Mid-Range Schema**

From these mid-range ethical understandings of "rightness" develops, directing the way in which participants define and examine what herein I call Lower-Mid-Range schema. As Thich Nhat Hanh notes in his instructive book *The World We Have*, "When you practice the Five Mindfulness Trainings, you become a bodhisattva, helping to create harmony, protect the environment, and cultivate brotherhood and sisterhood" (Nhat Hanh 2008: 10-11). This statement shares a remarkable correspondence to the ways in which the schema model for the Eyes of Compassion practitioners is herein developed, and suggests that this model is in fact reliable as this statement comes from the most influential formal teacher for the Eyes of Compassion teacher.

While ethical ideas (as stemming from the platform of mindfulness of interconnectedness on a master level) form the bulk of the immediate Mid-range schema, these schema are not quite as abstract as the Mid-range schema, instead making up the bulk of large-scale but daily activated. Three major themes (at least with regards to climate change discussion) that appeared to make up these Lower-mid-range schema (as taken from interview discussions) included "Professional Work/Job," "Eating," "Consumer Activities," and "Activist." These Lower-mid-

range schema presented here appear to be the ones that most directly tied to the practitioner's engagement with and ideas of climate change issues as taken from evidence in the interviews and observations during dharma discussions. Other issues might certainly see other Lower-mid-range schema, suggesting that this schematic level can grow to accommodate different aspects of a practitioner's life (for instance, if the topic of the discussions held with the practitioners was "how Buddhist practitioners conceptualize and engage with ideas of 'love,'" for instance, "family" and "partners" may form the bulk of the Lower-mid-range schema as opposed to the three offered here.)

When asked to describe their ecological values, ideas, ethics, and activities, many participants referenced their work lives as places in which they actively engaged ideas of climate change. This seemed deeply tied to the idea of "right profession," a foundational ethically informed Buddhist imperative included in the Eightfold Path. "I have to work with right livelihood on a daily basis," said Participant H when asked about his ecological beliefs and his practice beliefs. Participant C in particular discussed how he had left his long-time job in a technology field to focus his professional efforts on addressing issues of climate change. Participant H noted that he owns and operates his own "green" cleaning company, both of which participants saw as pursuing the ethically informed Buddhist directive of "right" profession. Another interview participant mentioned that she currently worked for a non-profit organization where she worked to implement "green practices" in the office itself. Three others referenced their professional positions as utilizing or being informed by the practice, and although their particular professions did not relate to climate change issues or have explicit environmental angles, it is important to note this as the mention of this suggests that individuals think about their profession as an important arena for enactment of their Buddhist environmental ethics, which themselves find root in the larger Master level abstractions.

The Lower-Mid-Range schema of "eating" was often one discussed occasionally in dharma discussions as well as during interviews with participants in the interviews. The schema for "Eating" seemed particularly rooted in the ethical directives offered in the First Mindfulness Training, which directed group members to be "Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, or in my way of life."

The First Training was not the only directive text often repeated during group meetings that spoke directly to the way in which ethics (and broader master-level ideas of interconnectedness and mindfulness) should be involved in how a practitioner conceptualized "eating." Indeed, one important textual recitation performed during every Sangha meeting was all about "ethical eating" practices. As presented above, the Five Contemplations were read prior to snack consumption during meetings sessions:

This food is a gift from the whole Universe- the Earth, the sky, and much hard work. May we be worthy to receive it. May we transform unskillful states of mind, especially the habit of eating without moderation. May we take only the foods that nourish us and prevent illness. We accept this food to realize the path of understanding and love.

Such utilization of ethical mid-range directives such as "compassion," "understanding," and "love," demonstrates that the Five Contemplations carries strong ethical directives that tie back to the mid-range schema. Eating should be ethical and mindful, suggests this directive. Participant A in particular referenced this text, noting its ethical directive to eat mindfully and to be aware of the interconnectedness of food as a key way in which the Sangha group itself engages in climate change issues, pointing out that during Sangha meetings, the snacks are sometimes organic.

Talk during dharma discussion was offered by Sangha members on the perceived challenges and benefits of "right" eating, and the "practice" was nearly always mentioned as a source for re-structuring many eating patterns deemed "un mindful" or harmful. "Right" eating was discussed, with some meeting participants noting that they ate meat, but that food consumption of all sorts should be done in a "right" way. For these participants (Participants A, B, and F), vegetarianism played a large part in their engagement of both the practice and the environment. As Participant F said, both her practice and her environmental ethic were "intimately connected with vegetarianism and veganism." This same participant noted that she felt the meat industry was a major contributor to the ongoing climate change crisis. As Participant F said:

It's very important to the environment to cut back on their meat production. It's just a huge number of animals- they're expelling methane into the air. We tend to think global warming has nothing to do with it... Thich Nhat Hanh says that when we're eating meat, we're eating the flesh of our children.

Participant A similarly referenced Thich Nhat Hanh when discussing the vegetarianism (or more broadly "eating"). "Thay's teachings around vegetarianism have been very impactful," she noted. Participant B and F both referenced the ethical-imperative level of "compassion" in regards to why they participate in a vegetarian (or most vegetarian) lifestyle. Eating seemed most directed by the mid-range concept of compassion, although discussion with participants suggested that this drive to be compassionate when eating was rooted in an understanding of interconnectedness and mindfulness of food choice, and also a mindfulness on how food choices could contribute to climate change.

A consumer activity was a topic about which participants seemed particularly comfortable discussing. Mostly, participants discussed daily activities in which they engage they felt were related to environmental or climate change consciousness and all these activities seemed to fall under this lower-mid-range descriptor of "Consumer Activities." While specific consumer



behavior patterns will be discussed as Lower-level schemas, this Lower-Mid-Range schema stemmed from the way many interview participants felt that "being a consumer" was an important layer of both the practice and their engagement of climate change issues. The Fifth Mindfulness Training specifically deals with the issue of consumer activities:

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I will practice looking deeply into how I consume the Four Kinds of Nutriment, namely edible foods, sense impressions, volition, and consciousness. I am determined not to gamble, or to use alcohol, drugs, or any other products which contain toxins, such as certain websites, electronic games, TV programs, films, magazines, books, and conversations. I will practice coming back to the present moment to be in touch with the refreshing, healing and nourishing elements in me and around me, not letting regrets and sorrow drag me back into the past nor letting anxieties, fear, or craving pull me out of the present moment. I am determined not to try to cover up loneliness, anxiety, or other suffering by losing myself in consumption. I will contemplate interbeing and consume in a way that preserves peace, joy, and well-being in my body and consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family, my society and the Earth.

Many participants referenced this Training in particular in interviews, as well as discussed "consumerism" in general terms, leading me to believe that the idea and act of "Consumption" is a category in the Lower-Mid-Range model. As Participant A noted, her thinking about consumption is an important aspect of both her practice and her engagement with the issue of climate change, but mindfulness is the strong influencer for thinking about what is "right" consumption, saying: "Sometimes it's an unpleasant feeling, that constant awareness of consumption." Participant G likewise referenced consumer activity in a broad way, saying "I try not to over consume."

Ideas of what "right" consumption are seem strongly influenced by the ethical values as present in the Five Mindfulness Trainings and other Buddhist ethical values. This category also saw direct motivational influence from the abstract Master level schema, as participants referenced bringing "mindfulness" to their consumer activities in particular, and mentioned the concept interconnectedness when referencing why an individual's consumption patterns were

important, as over consuming or un-mindfully utilizing any particular resource created a ripple wave of effects that had consequences for global warming.

Participants also referred to a broad range of specific activities (which will be examined in discussion on lower-level schema) that seemed to all fall under the category of "Activist Activities." These were political and social activities undertaken with direct correlation to climate change and other environmental activities. Participants discussed a wide range of clubs, rallies, causes, and campaigns of which they were a part when asked to discuss their environmental beliefs. This Activist schema seemed most informed by the ethical ideas presented by Thich Nhat Hanh in his talks about Engaged Buddhism, as discussed in depth in the Background chapter of this paper. Participant B in particular specifically referenced the idea of "Activism" but noted that her ways of viewing "right" activism were strongly influenced by the adoption of the practice, noting "I was an animal activist. It was bringing me a lot of anger in my soul... I used to be kind of hard core- not coming from a place of love but a place of anger. I'm more at a point of acceptance now."

These Lower-Mid-Range schema make up broad conceptual categorizations into which practitioners appeared most often to group their ways of talking about their daily activities (lower-level schema.) These categories were heavily informed by the ethical directives and values of the Mid-Range schema, but found their root in the Master levels of conceptualization. While these may not have particular motivational force on lower-level schema, they do provide a handy way for practitioners to break up their thinking about daily life. These categories likewise seemed reinforced for ways of thinking about personal daily activities by group textual narratives and readings, such as the Five Mindfulness Trainings and the Five Contemplations.

### **Lower Level Schema**

Lower-level schema in the cultural model developed for this paper refer to the daily activities that were motivated by all other layers of schematics. They are the daily activities that often are cognitively organized into the groupings of the Lower-Mid-Range schema. Lower-level schemas take all the motivators present in the other schematic levels and utilize them to direct daily life actions. As Participant H stated, when discussing the particular brand of Buddhism encouraged by Thich Nhat Hanh (and the type of Buddhism that informs much of the Eyes of Compassion Sangha activities and practices):

I guess it means putting it into practice in the day to day. How do you bring that [Buddhist ideas] to life? You can intellectualize it, but how does it make your life? I think it's about the opposite of conceptualizing. It's about manifesting. I mean, I understand how a motor in a car is put together- but how do I make it work?

While for graphical organization sake I have grouped them together under what appeared to be the most closely corresponding lower-mid-range schema, it should be kept in mind that many of these lower-level schema are cross-referential and practitioners appeared to think of many of the daily activities they discussed falling not under just one lower-mid range schema, but rather influenced by multiple schemas (which in turn were motivated by multiple ethical values in the mid-range schema and ultimately the Master level conceptualizations.)

For instance, when viewing something like "vegetarian food choices," this fell most easily under the Lower-Mid-Range concept of Eating, but also tied to the Consumer Activities schema as purchasing meat from a store was thought to contribute to cattle production that was earth harming (as Participant F noted during interviews.) For the sake of the model, the daily activities referenced were collected under their closest antecedent Lower-Mid-Range schema, but it should be assumed that they are cross-referential and influenced by many lower-mid-range categories.

While the larger concept of "Professional Life/Job" was referred to often in abstract terms (such as broad ideas of "right" professions from an ethical standpoint), but participants also discussed the daily activities and choices that they made in their professional life they felt were connected to the engaged the issue of climate change. For instance, Participant H indicated that, in his business, he utilizes green products for cleaning. Participant B noted that, in her workplace, she served on several committees that implemented green office programs, such as her previous job wherein her committee "got rid of all plastic and paper plates. We incorporated wellness into it, too, and got rid of vending machines."

As seen in the last statement by Participant B, food and eating choices crossed categories at times. Like avoiding vending machine foods and other processed products Participant B mentioned, several participants mentioned making specific food choices. Making vegetarian food choices was mentioned as part of an important part of daily engagement of the practice as it tied to their environmental concerns. Participant B, for instance, noted that, while she attempts to make vegetarian choices in daily life, when she occasionally eats fish, "I bless the fish." Participant B likewise noted that "I grow my own vegetables in the summer." Vegetarian food choices were also made by participants in the Eyes of Compassion Day of Mindfulness, who were asked to bring a vegetarian meal to the day. Food choices seemed an important daily activity that participants saw as connected not only connected to and motivated by all the layers of how they conceptualized climate change concerns through the lens of the practice.

Stephanie Kaza and Kristen Steele found similar trends towards vegetarian eating habits in their article "Buddhist Food Practices and Attitudes among Contemporary Western Practitioners" (as mentioned in the Literature Review section.) They similarly found a high rate of vegetarian food choices made on a daily basis amidst 13 Buddhist centers around the United States. This supports the idea that Buddhist ideas and values are indeed influencing this lower-

level schema across many groups practicing in the United States today, suggesting again that the cultural model developed may apply to more than simply the Eyes of Compassion group.

Consumer activities were also a large conceptual grouping for a variety of daily activities. Interview participants referred to a whole swath of consumer activities from riding the bus (so as not to purchase fuel for individual cars or even to avoid purchasing cars all together), purchasing household goods, purchasing furniture, and recycling or reusing the waste generated by the purchase of consumer goods and products (including foods). The idea of being a "conscious" or "mindful" consumer was often mentioned by interview participants. Participants also indicated that their consumer choices were often an extension of their larger practice, part of "putting it into day to day life" as Participant H noted.

Consumer choices extended from simply limiting the purchase of newly produced goods that were environmentally sound and reusing goods to lessen waste and production. "I use all products that are green," said Participant B of making purchasing choices of new goods. "Green" light bulbs were particularly mentioned by participants as a way in which they chose to purchase new goods that were ecologically sound and helped contribute in many ways to a lessening of climate change. "We changed every light bulb in the house," said Participant C. Participants A and B likewise echoed the statements on purchasing green bulbs, a way in which a small daily activity (lower-level schema) was informed by the larger schematic framework within the Cultural Model.

Participants also reported that they attempted to recycle consumer goods rather than to throw them into landfill-directed garbage in an attempt to reduce their carbon footprint and lessen the industrial production of new goods, something they saw as a contributor to the climate change issue. Utilizing Tupperware or recyclable food containers was mentioned by Participant A, and

Participants B and F noted that they attempted to use mostly second-hand household goods rather than purchase new ones. A high level of recycling was also reported amongst participants, with every interview subject mentioning recycling as one of their daily strategies for addressing climate change issues. When purchasing new goods, participants reported that they attempted to purchase "greener" goods as well. Participant H in particular discussed his recent purchase of furniture for his house, saying, "I just bought furniture that was made in the United States. It's made as close as possible so it won't have to drive very far."

Participants also reported that they were more likely to utilize public transit or bicycles in an attempt to cut back on carbon emissions in their daily life. When driving was mentioned, participants often linked it to oil consumption and the subsequent carbon output that contributed to climate change. "We try not to drive unnecessarily," said Participant C of his attempts to limit personal car use (Participant C also noted that he and his wife made the choice to drive hybrid cars when they did drive as well.) Participant H reported using a bicycle every day, and Participant B reported that she did not own a car for five years in an attempt to limit personal driving and oil consumption. Participant A noted that her family chose to live close to their children's school as well as her workplace in an attempt to limit daily driving and fuel consumption. Participant J, who was also working within the Colorado legislative sphere to promote programs to support transit, said that he did not own a car and took all business trips by bus. He also noted that, when he took rides from friends, he ensured that they would not have to go more than a mile from their own destination in an effort to conserve fuel further.

Besides the daily choices made about what to eat, what to buy, what to drive, and what products to use at work, participants were also involved frequently on a daily level in what they viewed as activist activities (as framed under the broader Lower-Mid-range schema.) While "Activism" was a larger schema of thinking about their many direct-action activities, the lower-

level ones were the actual activities in which interview subjects participated as part of their activist concept. For Participant E, this involved frequent ecologically oriented letter-writing campaigns to local and national legislators, attendance of rallies, and the hosting of a Sierra Club meeting in her home. Participant B noted that she felt her activism involved volunteering for RTD FastTracks and the Colorado Environmental Coalition. Participant A noted her involvement in the Voluntary Simplicity Movement, in which participants attempted to do a variety of activities such as limiting consumption, living in a smaller home, and so forth. Participant J was a former Colorado legislative member and noted that he had plans to engage again with the government system to promote environmental issues in the near future.

It can be seen when examining daily choices reported by the participants that many of their daily activities do seem motivated to a high degree by the larger framework of the Cultural Model. When discussing their daily life activities (these lower-level schematics), they often referenced the more abstract concepts of the Cultural Model, such as "interconnectedness" and "mindfulness" that they used as reference points when making daily activities. When asked if the adoption of a Buddhist practice changed the way in which they engaged with environmental issues, many participants noted that it did in fact make a profound change in the choices they made daily (although Participant G reported that she felt the choices she made daily were informed by both Buddhism and her ideas pre-adoption of the practice, or "one root and two different shoots coming from the same place," as she said.) Participant H said that the adoption of the larger practice framework changed him from a "pretty typical consumer" into a far more conscious and active consumer with regards to climate change. Participant E likewise noted that she felt since she adopted the practice that her ideas regarding ecology and climate change were "moving into action."

This implementation of something similar to the cultural model presented herein seems to be common across many of the Buddhist groups in the United States examined by Stephanie Kaza (as discussed in the Literature Review section.) As Kaza says, many of the practitioners in America who have adopted this "green practice path" are doing things such as "changing their light bulbs, taking the bus, insulating their homes, serving on community boards" (Kaza 2008: xi). Kaza notes that she has observed these changes springing from "a deeper motivation than home improvement," one that she observes is often rooted in a deepened awareness of and attention to environmental concerns: "They are bringing their best ethical and spiritual attention to environmental concerns and trying to match their actions to their moral principles" (Kaza 2008: xi). This appears to match with the information generated by interviews of Eyes of Compassion members as well as the survey information collected, thereby reinforcing the cultural model developed herein as an accurate depiction for a United States Buddhist community.

### **Survey Information Supporting Lower-Level Schematic Implementation Amongst Group Members**

Taking for granted that the cultural schematic model described in the above analysis is indeed a correct one for this particular cultural group, how might the salience of the cultural model be determined? While many of the interview members, for example, claimed that the adoption of the practice changed the way in which they regarded ecological issues such as climate change, how might this claim be assessed? Certainly, individual interview members discussed the daily actions (lower-level mundane schema) they engaged in (such as separating recyclables from garbage or utilizing public transit, carpools, and bicycles) in their interviews, but some brief statistical data garnered from fourteen surveys taken from group members may help support or refute the idea that the cultural model presented here is accommodated by many in the group. The data provided is not explicitly detailed; with a small group, it presents difficulties gathering wide-ranging data sets. However, the simplistic snapshots offered may hint at just how much the



acceptance of the cultural model did, as the participants claim, alter their activities. This data provides useful support for the interview information, as it gives a more concrete understanding of just how much the ideas presented by interview subjects were enacted by a wider range of group members. By measuring these lower-level schematic actions via the statistical data collected in the surveys, it may be possible to see how salient the abstract Master schema are for a broader portion of group members. For as McIntosh suggests, lower-level schematic enactment can help us understand the more abstract levels schemas and verify their cultural accommodation and veracity.

Recycling (or related, composting) was a theme mentioned by nearly every participant in the interviews, as mentioned above, and was emphasized in the Sangha itself as members were encouraged to utilize recyclable food containers when bringing lunches to Days of Mindfulness and weekly meditation session participants were asked to place their used tea bags in buckets for compost. Survey data supported that recycling was indeed something group members engaged in on a daily basis in their lives. All fourteen survey respondents reported regularly recycling actively. When asked to estimate the percentage of their waste they attempted to recycle each week, participants reported a high level of waste products were recycled (or potentially reused.) The lowest level of overall waste placed in recycling by survey participants was 20 percent, with the highest level reported at 80 percent of all waste materials. Median rates amongst survey participants for how much waste material was placed in recycling (or composted) were 46.5 percent. To generate median rates, estimated totals were added and divided by number of participants. For participants who gave a range (for example, one survey respondent estimated that they recycled 65-70 percent of waste on a monthly basis) This total was averaged for individual participants so as to obtain a median rate. To generate median rates, estimated totals were added and divided by number of participants. For participants who gave a range (for

example, one survey respondent estimated that they y recycled 65-70 percent of waste on a monthly basis) This total was averaged for individual participants so as to obtain a median rate

When compared to data from a study on Denver recycling rates and participation provided by a Denver's 9 News Channel, the 46.5 percent median weekly recycling rate proved higher than within the average Denver population, which recycled only 25 percent of potential recyclable materials on a weekly basis. In data provided by KRDO Channel 13 on the same subject, it was estimated that the United States on average recycled only 28 percent of all waste products disposed weekly. With an average of 75 percent of garbage in an average garbage can being available for some form of recycling, the Eyes of Compassion survey respondents seemed more careful in identifying and placing such materials out for recycling. Since recycling contributes to not only the amount of minerals and petrochemicals mined to create new metals and plastics, but also cuts down on the amount of deforestation that take place globally and reduces greenhouse gases used in new manufacture, as well as saves in emissions from transport of raw product material and products themselves.

Utilization of “green” low-energy light bulbs was also high amongst survey respondents. These bulbs are estimated to use 20 percent less power than regular household light bulbs and last 15 times longer on average. All survey participants reported using at least “some” low energy light bulbs in their home. Statistics on utilization of low energy bulbs nationwide are difficult to determine, although recent studies have shown an increase in low energy light bulbs in countries such as the United Kingdom. While comparative data was not found for the United States, a 100 percent reporting rate on at least some low energy light bulb usage does suggest a high attention to energy issues (and the ways in which such energy usage impacts the environment) amongst Eyes of Compassion group members.

This would seem to suggest that Eyes of Compassion members, utilizing the cognitive cultural model, are indeed more careful consumers and disposers. Indeed, as the survey with the Shambhala participants showed, 9 out of 10 group participants at that Sangha felt Buddhism has a strong influence on their consumer behavior, suggesting that this higher level of recycling may indeed be an antecedent of the way of thinking about climate change issues as presented in the cultural model.

Vegetarian eating was also something mentioned by interview participants as a way they addressed the climate change. It has been greatly discussed that the raising of animals (particularly the industrial farming systems that produce the majority of meats for consumption today) for food products could be a contributing factor to climate change causes, as the highly concentrated industrial farming animals create a high rate of methane, as well as requires high levels of grain (ranging anywhere from 0.3 pounds of grain per meat to 16 pounds per meat a minute) and production and transport of such feed results in high emissions that fuel global warming. The rate for vegetarianism likewise proved higher for the group than on average: Nine survey participants noted that they would consider themselves "vegetarian" or mostly vegetarian (one reported eating fish on occasion.) This indicates that 64 percent of the survey population ate no meat or poultry (with occasional fish). Compared to the Vegetarian Resource group's poll that determined an average of 3 percent of the population are considered vegetarian, this rate of vegetarian choice-making amongst Eyes of Compassion members suggests a extremely higher-than-average engagement with this aspect of climate change engagement.

All this statistical data suggests that the cultural model developed based on observations, analysis of narratives and other group readings, and interview information is indeed a valid one and appears to be highly accommodated amongst a broader range of group members (as opposed to the limited range of interview subjects.) While correlation between high levels of eco-activity

such as recycling and vegetarian eating habits and Buddhist ideas is not exact (other factors such as beliefs outside Buddhism or influence of other spiritual groups may be present), it does appear to strongly reinforce the model presented in this paper.

## Section 8: Conclusion

Kenneth Kraft, in his article "The Greening of Buddhist Practices" suggests that "Buddhism may... be a contributing to a shift in the lives of individuals or the conduct of certain group." In examining and creating a model of how practitioners in the Eyes of Compassion group think about and ultimately act with regards to issues of climate change, it appears that Kraft's assertion is indeed true.

When activated, the Master schema of Interconnectedness and Mindfulness give these practitioners an interesting and ultimately behavior-shifting way of thinking about and engaging with the world. As seen from the evidence taken from the surveys, this way of thinking may indeed be a more sustainable one environmentally than that of the average individual in the United States.

By providing a cultural model for practitioner engagement with climate change issues within the Eyes of Compassion Sangha, a particular structure for how individuals within this group think about and interact with the global warming crisis appears. This model may also demonstrate how this new strand of Buddhism appearing in the West is unique and distinctly different from the ways in which Buddhism presented in past research by the likes of Spiro, Ames, and Obeyesekere. This information will likewise contribute to the growing library of materials on this tradition that has just so recently taken root in the West, as Charles Prebish notes. Attention, at least for the groups such as Eyes of Compassion, seems to involve not a world renunciation, but an embrace of the interconnectedness of the world that ultimately motivates daily life and other (potentially activist) choices.

This way of thinking could also show that the practitioners of the Eyes of Compassion have a cultural model that is, in some ways, different from the broader way of conceptualizing climate change issues in the United States, since it involves explicit Buddhist ideas and values, different ethical directives motivate activity than might be present for a individual or group in the United States that does not have the same root schematic concepts and values. As Kaza notes, from a Buddhist perspective, 'green living' "becomes an expression of our deepest moral values. The 'work' of green living becomes less a chore and more a locus of ethical development. We conserve water not because we *should* but because we respect the earth's resources. This shift in thinking and understanding can be quite profound."

As Buddhist-inspired environmentalism "is also becoming manifest in national and international arenas," as Kraft notes, I hope that this brief glimpse of a model utilized by one particular Buddhist group may help inform how we understand the "Green practices" that are rapidly appearing on the international stage. Likewise, as seen from survey evidence, this way of thinking does appear to influence behavior with regards to climate change in a strongly positive way, which is something in which researchers searching for ways to bring about higher levels of active engagement with environmental themes, may be interested.

Writers such as Thich Nhat Hanh also have implied that the Buddhist structural thinking (such as found in the cultural model presented in this paper) can be useful for the whole planet to consider. "Urgent action must be taken at the individual and collective levels...We have the power to decide the destiny of our planet," Thay writes. "If we awaken to our true situation, there will be a change in our collective consciousness. We have to do something to wake people up. We have to help the Buddha to wake up the people who are living in a dream."

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## APPENDIX A: SURVEY

How often do you attend the Eyes of Compassion sangha?

Do you attend retreats or days of mindfulness or other activities in the larger sangha community?

Do you recycle? YES/NO

What percentage of your weekly garbage would you say you recycle/compost? (Just an approximation is fine!)

Are you a vegetarian? YES/NO

Do you utilize alternate transportation to cars (i.e., bikes, buses, trains) on a regular basis? YES/NO

Do you carpool? YES/NO

Do you use low energy light bulbs? YES/NO

Have you read any texts by Buddhist writers on ecological issues (such as Thich Nhat Hanh's "The World We Have" or Stephanie Kaza's Mindfully Green)?

Do you attend other faith communities or identify with other spiritual traditions or communities?