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BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICES
AS APPLIED TO UNLEARNING RACISM

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2008

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I wish to thank the faculty and administration of the Smith College School for Social Work for all their hard work over the years in committing themselves to healing the effects of racism and for first offering me the invitation to join in this work. I also wish to thank those individuals across the country making connections between Buddhism and unlearning racism, who offered their insights for this research.

May this study, in some way, serve to deepen the intimacy and love that is possible across race and between all people.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Through the practices of colonialism, genocide and slavery, the United States was steeped in racial violence from its beginning, and racism continues to take its toll in pervasive, conscious and unconscious ways today. While the civil rights movement made great progress in decreasing the level of more overt racial violence, changing the country's laws did not provide the bridge to change the hearts and minds of its citizens who had been thoroughly indoctrinated in racial bias.

Today, modern racism operates in more subtle, but equally-harmful ways and continues to devastate communities of color with poverty, preventing equal access to education, jobs, housing and healthcare. Racism also exacts a toll on people from the dominant culture, who frequently experience fear and shame when faced with relationships across race.

While large-scale, systemic changes are necessary, true racial healing will also require individuals to heal the deepest places in themselves affected by racial bias, and more effective tools may be necessary for this kind of work to take place. Because of the subtle and deeply personal nature of healing the effects of racism, exploring spiritual resources may be a much needed next step for effective anti-racism work.

The purpose of my study was to explore the application of Buddhist philosophy and practices to unlearning racism and anti-racism work. In this fixed-method, descriptive, qualitative study, I sought out 21 participants who were interested in anti-

racism work and professed a personal connection to Buddhist teachings and/or practices such as meditation. Through e-mail, I sent participants a survey of several questions about how they related Buddhism to both their anti-racism work with others and their personal processes of unlearning racism, as well as how they might apply body-based, Buddhist practices to unlearning the effects of racism in the body.

Currently, some amount of research has been conducted about the possibilities of unlearning racism and gaining awareness of personal racial biases; however, far less research has been done about the potential role of spirituality in this process. Similarly, the 2,500-year-old Buddhist tradition has explored numerous methods of opening the mind and heart and cultivating self-awareness, but there has been relatively little written about applying these techniques to unlearning racism. My hope is that this research will begin to narrow these gaps in the literature by giving voice to individuals throughout the country who are using Buddhist teachings and practices to inform their anti-racism work.

As a white Buddhist practitioner from the United States, I was interested in researching the applicability of Buddhism to anti-racism work for many reasons. In part my interest has come from my own experiences in Western Buddhist communities which have been mostly white, economically advantaged, and rarely have talked openly about race or privilege. In looking more deeply into this question of how to apply Buddhism to anti-racism work, I have found individuals throughout the country, both Buddhists of color and white allies, who have been coming up with very interesting answers.

Findings from this research may have important implications for better understanding the relevance of spiritual practices to efforts to unlearn racism. The study could deepen the impact of current anti-racism and diversity training in settings such as

social work education programs, furthering the goals in the social work code of ethics of promoting cultural competence and social justice (National Association of Social Workers, 1996).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will examine research related to applying Buddhist philosophy and practices to unlearning racism. The first section will focus on the question, “Why unlearn racism?” and will include reasoning for why this kind of work is important and worthwhile. The second portion will explore the importance of unlearning racism for effective social work education and practice. The third part will look at previous research on effective methods for unlearning racism. The fourth section will examine Buddhist teachings and practices that could be applied to increasing self-awareness and deepening the process of unlearning racism. Finally, the last section will explore how body-based, Buddhist practices could be applied to help heal the effects of racism in the body.

Why Work Towards Unlearning Racism?

The Legacy of Racism in the United States

The United States was founded by a white majority through the practices of colonialism, genocide, and slavery (Baldoquín, 2004). While a complete examination of the history of racism in the United States is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to begin with acknowledging the painful racial legacy of this country. As the meditation center, Spirit Rock, articulated in their diversity program initiative, “Separation occurs in innumerable forms; however, in North American society a most difficult and deeply

profound wound is that of race” (Diversity Council of Spirit Rock Meditation Center, 2001, ¶ 2).

Depending on an individual’s social location with regards to race and privilege, the suffering related to racism may be experienced as quite constant or nearly invisible. While not often noticed or talked about by the dominant culture, subtle and overt forms of racial bias constantly inform interpersonal interactions, organizations, and the culture at large. Individuals living the United States have inherited a complex and painful racial legacy which impacts countless aspects of their lives. For an in-depth look at this topic, see Miller and Garran (2008).

Defining Racism

The illusion of race. To begin with, it is important to recognize that the idea of race is a human construct. During the 18th and 19th centuries, white European scientists and anthropologists constructed a classification of human beings into a hierarchical order so as to justify the subjugation and domination of nonwhite people (Wander, Martin & Nakayama, 2005). There is only one race: the human race, and the commonly-used idea of race refers to “some intrinsically insignificant geographical/physical differences between people” (Dyer, 2005, p. 9). As Johnson (2004) so eloquently put it, “race is the grandest of all our lived illusions” (p. 128).

While it would not be possible to discuss racism without language reflecting racial categories, the painful limitation of this language is that it reinforces the false belief in meaningful racial differences. Throughout this discussion, it is important to remember that the random assignment of undeserved, race-related privilege and prejudice, and all the suffering caused thereof, hinges on something that doesn’t even exist.

Racism as power structure. While many kinds of racial bias exist between and within groups in the United States, for the purposes of this paper and research, I will focus the definition of racism in a particular way. Rather than simply equating racism with personal prejudice, Wellman (1993) looked at racism in terms of maintaining a system of privilege based on race. In this way, he defined racism as “culturally sanctioned beliefs which, regardless of the intentions involved, defend the advantages whites have because of the subordinated position of racial minorities” (p. xi).

Wellman (1993) has argued convincingly that limiting the definition of racism to prejudiced ideas does not adequately take into account the superior position enjoyed by whites, the benefits that follow from their position, and the institutions that maintain the position. He added that white racism is in fact, “a culturally sanctioned, rational response to struggles over scarce resources” (p. 54).

The impact of American racism on immigrant groups and even white, European ethnicities is quite complex, and a thorough examination is beyond the scope of this paper. It will not be possible to include perspectives from all different groups of people of color, and frequently the literature narrows the focus to look at the experiences of African-Americans in the United States. While this perspective is inevitably limiting, it also makes sense in terms of this country’s history.

Although many groups have experienced painful racial discrimination in the United States, as Pettigrew (1996) has noted, “the legacy of two centuries of slavery and another century of enforced segregation, joined with racist ideology” has made the African-American experience unique in American history (p. xii). This realization has

focused the literature on American racism in a way that often centers on black-white relations and this focus will often be reflected in this review.

Modern racism. In order to understand the persistent and widespread nature of racism in the United States, it is important to acknowledge that racism operates in response to sociopolitical pressures and changes over time (Wellman, 1993). In researching contemporary American racism, Valentino and Sears (2005) found that while more overt, old-fashioned racism has mostly gone out of style, a much more subtle modern racism or racial resentment has taken its place.

Indeed, a key element in modern racism involves the denial that racism even exists. As long as people in the dominant culture insist on limiting the definition of racism to personal prejudice, the power structure of racism becomes invisible and the very people benefiting from racism are free to say that the term, racist, does not apply to them (Wellman, 1993). Wellman went further to add that liberal, middle-class whites are “trained” to cover up prejudice and to verbalize tolerance (p. 51).

However, underneath professed tolerance, unconscious and often unintentional racial bias manifests through microaggressions in everyday life (Sue et al., 2007). Racial microaggressions can be defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 271). This subtle, mostly unconscious level of racial bias is the unavoidable inheritance of people living in a racist society.

White privilege. Because privilege inherently allows the option of ignoring oppression, privilege operates mostly invisibly for those who have it (Wildman & Davis,

2005). In her groundbreaking work in the 1980s illuminating white privilege, McIntosh (2005) articulated the myriad of ways that privilege manifests in her life as a white person, including not being asked to speak for all members of her racial group, being able to go shopping and assume she won't be followed, and being able to turn on the TV and see members of her race represented. McIntosh wrote about the difficulty in acknowledging white privilege with the following:

The pressure to avoid [the subject] is great, for in facing it I must give up the myth of meritocracy. If these things are true, this is not such a free country; one's life is not what one makes it; many doors open for certain people through no virtues of their own. (p. 111)

The Costs of Racism

Impact on people of color. The Advisory Board to the President's Initiative on Race (1998) under President Clinton found that racism continued to be one of the most divisive forces in the United States and that racial legacies impacted current policies and practices that created unjust disparities between majority and minority groups. Indeed, they found that "the color of one's skin [continued] to affect an individual's opportunities to receive a good education, acquire the skills to get and maintain a good job, have access to adequate health care, and receive equal justice under the law" (p. 35).

Current research has reflected the same trends. The National Urban League (2007) has found that unemployment rates for blacks in the United States is more than twice that of whites; less than 50% of black families own their own homes, as opposed to nearly 76% of white families; and education for black people continues to be of lower quality than for whites.

Furthermore, racism takes a serious toll on the health and well-being of people of color. The white population in the United States lives five years longer than the black population (National Urban League, 2007). The black community also shows higher rates of AIDS and diabetes than the general American population (National Urban League, 2007). Research has also shown that exposure to racism may contribute to stress-induced, higher blood pressure among African-Americans (Hill, Kobayashi & Hughes, 2007).

Societal impact. The journey of unlearning racism is not easy, and a reasonable question follows as to why white people would even want to begin, when it seems that the primary cost of racism is born by people of color. Although white people undeniably benefit from the system of racial advantage, the personal and societal costs of racism to members of the dominant culture are numerous and powerful.

As Pettigrew (1996) has highlighted, racism still serves to enforce a kind of modern segregation and because most white Americans have little or no social contact with black Americans, “interracial social contact is generally awkward at best” (p. xi). This interpersonal strain becomes a major liability in the workplace, as “one large part of the American population is uncomfortable with and unskilled at working with another large part of the population” (p. xi).

Since the 1980’s, corporate America has shown an increased interest in diversity issues, not necessarily out of good-will or egalitarian values, but because “white America has a long-term self-interest in promoting and fostering a healthy diversity in the workplace” (Baker, 1996, p. 139-140). Essentially, the strain of racism has negatively impacted corporate effectiveness (Fernandez, 1996).

As companies realize the economic liability that racism holds, many corporations are beginning to investigate how they could benefit from a more inclusive workplace. In an increasingly diverse marketplace, companies can gain an edge by hiring and maintaining a diverse workplace, which can effectively understand and mirror the diversity among their customers. Furthermore, in order to compete in a new era of globalization, firms forming alliances with non-U.S. firms are requiring the full utilization of the talents of diverse employees, as well as an increase in cross-cultural sensitivity (Baker, 1996).

Baker (1996) has argued that creating a workplace that fosters cooperation, respect, and acceptance among diverse employees is essential for a company to maintain competitiveness. In this kind of environment, companies may also expect to reduce costs spent in discrimination complaints, as well as costs related to employee turn-over.

Finally, it is important to note that the negative effects of racism are not only directed at corporations, but at white workers themselves. Because racism creates a divided and weakened working class, workers experience a decrease in their collective bargaining power and impact. A working class divided by race lowers the ability of workers to gain wage increases and improved working conditions, which serves the interests of large corporations, rather than the workers of any race (Marx & Engels, 1972). For further analysis of the negative impact of racism on the American working class, see Mason (1996).

Personal impact on white Americans. Beyond the negative impact of racism on American society, racism enacts a personal cost to white people as well. When it comes to issues surrounding race, white people often experience intense confusion, as well as

feelings of guilt, shame, helplessness, and anxiety (Jones & Carter, 1996). Crowfoot and Chesler (1996) also found that denial, hostility, fear, and guilt unavoidably co-exist with unearned privileges.

In looking at the impact of racism on the dominant culture, Crowfoot and Chesler (1996) found that white men experience guilt and fear when relating with people of color, as well as isolation, lack of influence, or dissatisfaction in interracial relationships. Some white men also experience a sense of alienation from themselves, as they have suppressed parts of themselves that do not conform to the white male culture.

Rose (1996) has articulated that fighting oppression is in the best interest of both those in the dominant group, as well as those targeted. She has suggested that nontargets of oppression experience the loss of intimacy across race and the loss of genuine human connections. Fernandez (1996) articulated the costs in this way:

A white-centered, superior attitude leaves the people holding it isolated, confused, and mentally underdeveloped... Whites develop unhealthy mechanisms, such as denial, false justification, projection, disassociation, and transference of blame, to deal with their fears about minorities... Racism produces false fears in Whites and allows these fears to control where they live, where they go to school, where they travel, where they work, with whom they socialize, where they play, and whom they love and marry. (p. 164)

Beyond the emotional cost that racism enacts of white people, there is a moral cost as well. In *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela (1994) wrote, "I knew as well as I knew anything that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed... The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity" (p. 544). McIntosh (2005) has also articulated that the so-called privilege to ignore or dominate less powerful people distorts the humanity of the holders as well as of the targets groups.

Although the truths of racism can be difficult to face, the journey of unlearning racism can allow white people a deeper connection with themselves, as well as with their neighbors of color. Speaking of his personal experiences with unlearning racism, Ring (2000) articulated that “while it is often a process involving pain, conflict, anger, and discomfort, the training can also be a process of discovery, relief, and joy” (p. 80).

Importance of Unlearning Racism for Social Work Education and Practice

One important application for diversity and unlearning racism training is in educating members of the helping professions. In particular, social work training programs are responsible for educating practitioners who can challenge social injustice in ways that “promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity” (National Association of Social Workers, 1996, p. 5). While educators may agree on the importance of these goals, teaching effective, culturally-sensitive skills can also be quite challenging.

Two white, Canadian social work professors, Moffatt and Miehl (1999), have explored some of the pitfalls to diversity training that they have witnessed in the classroom. They have highlighted the tendency of dominant culture students to prematurely take on social work identities which they think are neutral and anti-discriminatory, but which are actually limited and blind to their own privilege. Furthermore, Moffatt and Miehl have asserted that historically, the field of social work has been entrenched in notions of the social worker as normal or neutral and the client as a pathologized other. They cautioned that claims of neutrality do not allow for self-reflection and actually operate as a strategy of power.

From their experiences teaching social work students, Moffatt and Miehl (1999) have also noticed the tendency of students from the dominant culture to actively ignore racial differences among their classmates in an effort not to be perceived as racist. However, they asserted that “to ignore difference is a strategy of power in that it does not require a repositioning of oneself vis a vis another” (p. 73). Being able to notice and talk about perceived differences is a necessary first step to this repositioning. Through greater awareness of their own subjective experiences students can create social work identities that give up claims of neutrality and allow for more informed dialogue across differences (Moffat & Miehl, 1999).

King Keenan (2004) has also underscored the necessity for social workers to meet clients in a way that takes the dialogue out of center/margin relations and places both individuals in a complex, socially-located relationship embodying their similarities and differences. To support inclusive, ethical practice, King Keenan (2004) has encouraged social workers to maintain an informed, not-knowing stance and to engage continually in a reflexive process.

In training social workers, it is imperative that education allows for a deepening of each student’s self-awareness and understanding of identity. In order for clinical social workers and other helping professionals to work therapeutically across racial and ethnic differences, educators need tools to help students uncover the subtleties of their internalized bias, understand their own socially-located views and experiences, and learn to dialogue in competent and respect ways about difference. In these ways, future practitioners can increase the efficacy and cultural competency of their clinical work. Without consciously taking steps to unlearn racism, Sue et al. (2007) have warned that

white clinicians are likely to unintentionally and unconsciously express racial bias through racial microaggressions, which can negatively impact the therapeutic process.

Effective Methods for Unlearning Racism

Racial Identity Development

For lasting change to occur, white individuals need tools to work through and heal their internalized dominance, while people of color need similar tools to work with their internalized oppression. Understanding healthy racial identity development gives a starting place for understanding how to heal racism at the personal level.

Cross (1991) has outlined five stages of racial identity development for black people including pre-encounter, encounter, immersion/emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment. In healthy African-American development, young people form a positive sense of what it means to be black, and this strong sense of themselves and their community helps bolster their resilience in dealing with societal racism (Tatum, 1997). Although Cross (1997) developed his model by focusing on African-American development, the basic tenets can be applied to all people of color who have encountered cultural, racial or ethnic oppression (Tatum, 1997).

Individuals in the pre-encounter stage have a non-Afrocentric identity and have a race neutral or anti-Black orientation. The encounter stage refers to experiencing an event that dislodges the pre-existing identity in some way. In the immersion/emersion stage, individuals undergo an intense period of transition towards a positive black identity. While, immersion is marked by glorification of African culture and possibly the denigration of white culture, emersion brings more emotional and cognitive openness. Internalization and internalization-commitment bring further “mellowing” and

confidence to the Black identity, as rage against white people becomes controlled anger towards systems of oppression, and insecurity becomes self-love and Black pride (Cross, 1997, p. 159).

In the healthy development of white identity, Helms (1990) offered two major goals: to abandon personal racism and to define a positive white identity. She delineated six stages of this developmental process including contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudo-independent, immersion/emersion, and autonomy.

The contact stage begins when the white person first encounters the idea or actuality of black people. The person in the contact stage is benefiting from societal racism without necessarily being aware of this benefit. The disintegration stage occurs when experiences force the white person to acknowledge that there are differences in how whites and blacks are treated in society. The disintegration stage is characterized by the moral dilemma that despite professed egalitarian values, whites treat blacks with racial animosity. In order to decrease the discomfort that this dilemma produces, whites tend to remove themselves from interracial environments. Desire for acceptance among their racial group also encourages whites to adopt a belief in white superiority, which leads them to the reintegration stage, where guilt and anxiety are transformed to fear and anger towards black people (Helms, 1990).

The pseudo-independent stage begins when the white person begins to question the justifiability of racism and understand how he or she perpetuates racism. As the white person begins to form a positive white identity, unrelated to racism, he or she enters the immersion/emersion stage. Finally, the white person achieves the autonomy stage as he or she internalizes and applies this new definition of whiteness, seeks to learn from other

cultural groups, and becomes increasingly aware of other forms of oppression (Helms, 1990).

Malleability of Bias

In looking at how to promote healthy racial identity, it is important to begin with looking at the malleability of bias. Early research by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson and Sanford (1950) reported that intense prejudice was virtually intractable in certain power-oriented, irrational, authoritarian personalities. Their research linked these characteristics to hierarchical, exploitive parenting styles and gave a poor prognosis for shifting rigidly held racist beliefs.

Although research by Adorno et al. (1950) made one of the first important analyses of personal racism and is still frequently referenced, the application of these findings to the present day is limited for several reasons. To begin with, the research reflected the culture of the pre-Civil Rights Era where racial bias was more culturally-sanctioned and racial aggression manifested more overtly. It is difficult to generalize these findings to modern racism which manifests with far more subtlety. Furthermore, defining racism as a rigid personality trait only located within select individuals obscures the fact that *all* individuals living in a racist society will hold varying levels of conscious and unconscious racial bias. Linking racist personalities to authoritarian parenting styles does not explain the pervasive and wide-spread nature of racism.

In this way, the focus of Adorno et al.'s (1950) research reflected a limited understanding of the workings of racism at the societal level. By locating prejudice exclusively in the individual's irrationally power-oriented personality, the larger context

of how racism functions to protect and maintain sought-after privileges is lost (Wellman, 1993).

Contemporary research has reflected new definitions and manifestations of racism and current findings are far more hopeful when it comes to the malleability of racial bias. In their research on students in prejudice and conflict seminars, Rudman, Ashmore and Gary (2001) found that prejudice and stereotypes are malleable and may be effectively changed through affective processes.

A significant strength of Rudman et al.'s (2001) research is that they did not rely solely on the measure of self-reported prejudice, which is limited by participants being consciously aware of bias and willing to reveal potentially embarrassing views. Instead, the study measured both explicit and implicit, automatic bias. To measure this automatic bias, researchers used the Implicit Association Test, which measures the reaction time that it takes participants to pair positive attributes with traditionally Black male names. This reaction time indicates how difficult it is for a participant to go against racially stereotypical thinking.

Over a fourteen week period, participants in the diversity seminars learned about intergroup conflict, engaged in discussion, and kept journals noting instances of their own bias (Rudman et al., 2001). These cognitive methods were supplemented with affective experiences of potentially positive interactions between white participants and the African-American professor and potential prosocial contact between participants of different races.

Rudman et al. (2001) found that in the course of the seminars, not only did self-reported prejudice diminish, but the level of more implicit or automatic racial bias

decreased as well. The researchers emphasized that these findings were significant because it had been thought that implicit bias was mostly intractable. The researchers summarized the results of the study in this way: “The present findings suggest that, for volunteers, educational forums designed to promote appreciation for diversity, friendships with out-group members, and insight into one’s own prejudice and stereotypes can enable the unlearning of both implicit and explicit biases” (p. 866).

In looking at how to counteract explicit bias, Rudman et al. (2001) emphasized that cognitive recognition of personal bias may be useful. Wilson and Brekke (1994) have agreed that self-awareness of bias is crucial in order to counter “mental contamination” or unwanted and unconscious mental processing (p. 117). However, when it comes to implicit, automatic racial bias, reduction may be accessed more effectively through emotional means (Rudman et al., 2001).

Rudman et al. (2001) acknowledged that limitations of the study included not knowing if the results remained stable over time. Furthermore, because the sample for the study consisted of volunteers, who may have chosen to participate out of a predisposition to work with racial bias, there is no way to generalize the effects of the diversity seminars to neutral or unwilling participants.

The research of Rudman et al. (2001) found a similarity between levels of anti-Black stereotypes held by white and black participants. I would add that further work is necessary to understand the impact of internalized racism on people of color and how workshops can be tailored to the needs of both white and black participants. Future study needs to also address how other groups of color relate with racial bias.

Promoting Healthy Racial Identity

In reviewing various strategies for unlearning racism, Pedersen, Walker and Wise (2005) found that attention must be paid to carefully structure anti-racism curricula to avoid the risk of increasing negative stereotypes and resistance to cross-cultural work. They found that promising techniques included challenging false beliefs, using empathy, giving people the chance to discuss racial issues, and interacting with people of different backgrounds under certain conditions.

In drawing on many hundreds of workshops that she has conducted in the United States on cross-cultural communication, Rose (1996) has found that a good starting point for white participants is to help them understand their own ethnicity and frame of reference. A second goal is to shift this frame of reference to allow participants to see the world from another's point of view, as participants learn to define and recognize interlocking systems of oppression.

Miller and Garran (2008) have offered further insights into a process for unlearning racism and confronting stereotypes. They have outlined detailed steps for working with racial bias including (a) monitor dissonance with conscious beliefs, (b) monitor thoughts and feelings that accompany the stereotype, (c) take a perspective, (d) use replacement thoughts, (e) practice, (f) develop egalitarian goals, and (g) surround yourself with allies.

Through the steps that Miller and Garran (2008) have laid out, individuals seek to bring unconscious stereotypes to the surface, including the emotional and cognitive components of this material. Next, individuals are encouraged to cultivate empathy in order to shift their perspectives. With the technique of using replacement thoughts,

individuals consciously create a thought that contradicts one of the stereotypes that they have. Whenever they notice the stereotype appearing, they think of their contradictory antidote. Kawakami, Dovidio, Moll, Hermsen and Russin (2000) reported that practicing this process repeatedly leads to the replacement thought becoming more dominant than the original stereotype. Finally, forming strong commitments to developing egalitarian goals and seeking out allies supports individuals in approaching unlearning racism with courage and persistence (Miller & Garran, 2008).

Cross (1991) emphasized that people of color can be supported in creating healthy racial identities that are flexible and sophisticated. He outlined the need to (a) increase awareness that racism is part of American society, (b) recognize that regardless of social class, one can be targeted with racism, (c) increase well-developed ego defenses that can be used to combat racism, (d) create a “system blame and personal efficacy orientation” in which one tends to fault circumstances and not oneself, and (e) strengthen a religious orientation that prevents bitterness towards the self or white people (p. 215).

Buddhist Philosophy and Practices as Applied to Unlearning Racism

Because Buddhism provides techniques for working with both the heart and the mind in order to be more awake and compassionate, these teachings and practices may inform the process of unlearning racial bias and healing the suffering produced by racism. A thorough examination of the numerous schools, teachings, and practices of Buddhism is beyond the scope of this paper; however, the following section will focus on several Buddhist teachings and practices most pertinent to the subject of racism, as well as provide an overview of the current literature which applies Buddhism to anti-racism

work. To begin with, it is important to understand how Buddhism made its way to the United States.

The Migration of Buddhism to the West

More than 2,500 years ago, the man who would become known as the Buddha was born as a person of color in the north of India. After he became enlightened, he taught for forty-five years throughout India, and after his death, his teachings migrated to Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Burma, Japan, China, Tibet, Laos, Thailand, Korea and Vietnam (Masters, 2004). Centuries later, Buddhism came to Europe and North America through immigrants of color, in particular through Chinese immigrants in the 1860s and later through waves of Asian Buddhists in the late 1950s through 1970s (Baldoquín, 2004). In looking at the history of Western Buddhism, the AfroCuban immigrant and Zen priest, Reverend Baldoquín (2004) has emphasized how critical it is not to locate the point of origin in a white, European American context, but rather in the spirituality of people of color.

However, many Western American Buddhist communities today are made up predominately of white people. Buddhist practitioners of color frequently relate that they are one of the only Buddhists of color in meditation groups and retreats and that they often feel uncomfortable in these predominately white communities (Baldoquín, 2004; Duran, 2004; Jones, 2004; Steele, 2004; Steinbach, 2004). Buddhist practitioners of color frequently relate stories of how predominately white Buddhist communities can be inhospitable to people of color and how subtle or not-so-subtle racial prejudice prevents accessibility to members outside the dominant culture.

Another primary deterrent to people of color joining Western Buddhist communities pertains to economic class. As Willis (2004) put it: “In short, there are two essential requirements necessary for doing a Buddhist retreat here: money and leisure time” (p. 222). She has encouraged that all members of Buddhist communities work together to find creative solutions to these problems.

Buddhism’s arrival in the United States has marked the first time in history that Buddhist teachings have come to a racially heterogeneous place that was founded by a white majority through practices of racial oppression (Baldoquín, 2004). In looking at the teachings of Buddhism in general and their application to unlearning racism in particular, it is imperative to examine how Buddhism has been translated to Western culture and what may have been lost in that translation.

As Ralph Steele (2004), an African-American, Buddhist teacher and long-time practitioner, realized, “I suddenly understood that the American and European teachers of Buddhist practice had brought their own cultural baggage to the practice as it was taught in the U.S. This baggage included unconscious racism” (p.76). Because of the white skin privilege and cultural baggage carried by many white Buddhist practitioners, the literature available on applying Buddhism to heal the effects of racism is almost exclusively written by Buddhist practitioners of color. The insights of these people “who physically resemble most closely the original practitioners who followed the Buddha” (Baldoquín, 2004, p. 22) are invaluable for illuminating the blind spots that European American Buddhists may have with regards to the teachings and for understanding the applicability of Buddhism to healing the effects of racism.

Application of Buddhist Philosophy

The Buddha as example. The life story of the Buddha can be told in many ways. Although not always framed as such by white Buddhist teachers, Chinese American and social activist, Viveka Chen (2004) has compared the Buddha to civil rights leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., explaining that “the Buddha was a freedom fighter who launched a spiritual movement empowering people to end mental, physical, and spiritual enslavement” (p.111).

Around 563 B.C.E., a prince named Siddhartha Gautama was born in what is now Nepal, near the Indian border (Smith, 1958/1991). Despite all the luxury and privilege of the palace, Siddhartha “felt dissatisfied in that enclosure [and]... yearned to come in contact with the reality of things” (Reissig, 2004, p. 53). Upon finally venturing outside the palace, legend has it that Siddhartha encountered the Four Heavenly Messengers: an old person, a sick person, a corpse, and a wandering monk. In this way, Siddhartha moved beyond the walls of privilege and encountered suffering, as well as a glimpse of the way out. At the age of 29, Siddhartha left his home to become a mendicant and embrace spiritual practice (Reissig, 2004). Six years later, this ordinary man woke up and became known as the Buddha, which in Sanskrit means the Awakened One (Smith, 1958/1991).

The story of the Buddha can also be viewed as having implications for working with privilege and prejudice. As a prince, Siddhartha was born into the highest caste as a Brahman (Hanh, 1991). The word for caste in India is varna, which literally means color (Willis, 2001). In 2000-1500 B.C.E., the Aryans, who were formerly from southern Europe, invaded India and created the caste system to distinguish themselves from the

darker-skinned indigenous people. While the caste system today is more often referred to as a class system, there are clearly correlations to skin color (Willis, 2001).

Pulitzer prize winner and social visionary, Alice Walker (2004) has illuminated the suffering created by the caste system in India, as well as the parallels to suffering caused by racism in the United States:

Buddha, presumably raised as a Hindu, was no doubt disheartened by its racism; i.e., the caste system that today blights the lives of 160 million Indians. Indians who were once called “Untouchables” and now call themselves “Dalits” or “Those broken to pieces.” They are not allowed to own land. They cannot enter the same doors, attend the schools, or drink from the same wells, as the so-called higher castes. Their shadow must never fall on those above them. They are brutalized and the women raped at will. *Niggers* of India, they are. (p. 193)

Although none of the literature I reviewed explicitly drew this parallel, I would argue that because of his position in the caste system, the life of the Buddha offers an example of an individual moving beyond the privileges associated with skin color. His life story also illuminates how privilege does not shield an individual from dissatisfaction and suffering, and that only through leaving the confines of privilege can one find a way out of suffering. In a similar way, Tibetan meditation master and teacher, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche (1984), described this phenomenon:

If you succeed in encasing yourself completely, you may feel secure but you will also feel terribly lonely. This is... the loneliness of being trapped in the cocoon... The challenge of warriorship is to step out of the cocoon, to step out into space, by being brave and at the same time gentle... You simply expose your heart completely. (pp. 156-157)

Although Trungpa Rinpoche did not apply this teaching to unlearning racism, I would argue that his idea of cocoon provides a highly useful analogy for the fear, isolation, and emotional disconnect often associated with white skin privilege. In this

way, emerging from the suffocating comfort of privilege is necessary if one is to engage whole-heartedly in the direct, raw experience of life.

Not only did the Buddha challenge his own privileged position in a racist system of oppression, he challenged the system as a whole. The Buddha defied convention by welcoming and teaching individuals of all social locations within society, including brahmins and outcastes, ascetics and householders, and eventually women (Reissig, 2004). Zen master and human rights activist, Thich Nhat Hanh (2004), made this point explicit by expressing, “The Buddha always addressed the system of caste, and he talked about nobility in terms of thinking, speech, and action, not in terms of blood or race” (p. 63). From racially divided ancient India to a prejudiced contemporary American culture, the concept of human worth existing completely apart from racial characteristics remains a radical idea today.

The Four Noble Truths. In addition to the Buddha’s life as an example, his teachings also bear important implications for anti-racism work. One of the core teachings of Buddhism is known as the Four Noble Truths. These are (a) there is suffering, (b) the causes of suffering are greed, aversion, and delusion, (c) there is an end to suffering, and (d) there is a path to the end of suffering (Baldoquín, 2004).

The Buddha began teaching by acknowledging that suffering is part of the human experience (Jones, 2004). However, he taught that by looking into the nature of suffering, a way out would emerge. The causes of suffering, such as greed, aversion, and delusion can also be described as craving and ignorance (Steele, 2004). Although the external discomforts of life will continue, understanding the causes of suffering offers liberation. Hanh (2004) has assured us that “pain is inevitable, but suffering is optional” (p. 63).

The path to end suffering, which the Buddha articulated in the Fourth Noble Truth is known as the Eightfold Path. The steps of the path have been described in this way: perfect view, perfect thought, perfect speech, perfect conduct, perfect livelihood, perfect effort, perfect mindfulness, and perfect concentration (Johnson, 2004).

Although a thorough examination of the Eightfold Path is beyond the scope of this paper, we can turn our attention for a moment to the first step, which is translated as perfect or right view. Hanh (2004) has described Right View as understanding the wisdom of interbeing and nondiscrimination. This sense of interbeing hinges on the Buddhist teaching that there is no self separate from others. Hanh went so far as to say, “We inter-are; that is the fact. You are in me and I am in you, it’s silly to discriminate against each other. It is ignorance to think that you are superior to me or that I am superior to you” (p. 67).

Understanding interconnectedness and interbeing can be especially useful for people of color struggling with the effects of racism in their lives. Manuel (2004) related the following:

Once I understood that no living being exists independently, I understood how I suffered—how I felt isolated in a dark body. I was awakened to an innate wisdom. This wisdom said that there was no separation between me and all other living beings...that despite internally and externally imposed separation, I belonged. With that wisdom, I would not be an accomplice to my own disappearance. (p. 42)

This idea of interbeing could be a powerful tool in the journey of unlearning racism. Individuals from both dominant and targeted groups could benefit from this teaching, because “the oppressed and the oppressors are inside of us” (Hanh, 2004, p. 67) and both discrimination and privilege affect all of us in different ways.

Through properly understanding this idea of interbeing, individuals naturally come to understand the second aspect of Right View, nondiscrimination, which is directly applicable to anti-racism work. Hanh (2004) summarized in this way: “When we are able to practice the teaching of the Buddha and come back to the present moment... we are not discriminating anymore, our hearts are open to embrace all races, all cultures” (p. 70).

Buddha nature. The Buddha taught that human beings are fundamentally wakeful, whole, and complete as they are. This sense of basic goodness or Buddha nature expresses the idea that “we are, just as we are, originally good, fundamentally wise, and basically sane and loving” (Ferguson, 2004, p. 99). In this way, Buddhist practice is a journey of reclaiming this original state and Hanh (2004) has taught that each person is a “Buddha-to-be” (p. 66).

This teaching on natural purity and goodness is especially important for people of color who “grow up in societies saturated with ideas and values that invalidate their very existence” (Ferguson, 2004, p. 97). Because racist, Eurocentric ideals often take a disastrous toll on people of color, the Buddhist teachings of liberation can be particularly useful in order for an “inner ‘decolonizing’ of the mind and spirit” to take place (p. 98).

Habitual patterns. Just as Buddhism acknowledges the fundamental purity of human beings, it also talks about the painful mental and emotional obscurations covering over basic goodness and creating suffering. The craving and ignorance described in the Second Noble Truth as causes of suffering are kept in motion through habitual patterns which increase contraction and isolation (Chen, 2004). Habitual patterns operate mostly unconsciously, moment-by-moment and Buddhist teachings encourage individuals to recognize habitual patterns and to reinforce patterns of increased openness and

connection (Chen, 2004). Buddhist mindfulness practices cultivate the self-awareness and attention to the present moment necessary for working with habitual patterns. These practices will be explored in more depth in the following section.

Loving-kindness. While many Buddhist teachings begin with focus on the individual's suffering, they also give attention to compassionate action towards others. Duran (2004) summarized Buddhism in this way: "Buddhism is about awakening through love and compassion" (p. 48). Individuals who work to pay attention to and end the suffering of others are known as bodhisattvas, or spiritual warriors (Manuel, 2004).

The implications of the bodhisattva vow are numerous for how practitioners must address racial inequality. Duran (2004) made the connection in this way:

If our practice is moving towards the bodhisattva vow of making every moment of each lifetime fully committed to the freedom from suffering of all sentient beings, we must begin to see clearly deep into the suffering of people of color and not shy away from it. (pp. 48-49)

A further implication of the bodhisattva vow is the need for white practitioners to deeply investigate how they, themselves, unintentionally perpetuate the suffering of people of color.

Application of Buddhist Practices

Meditation. One of the steps of the Eightfold Path, Right Mindfulness, leads us into a discussion of how Buddhist philosophy interrelates with Buddhist practices. The practice of mindfulness meditation is an integral part of many Buddhist traditions.

As Johnson (2004) articulated, "the problem of life is, to a great degree, the problem of attention" (p. 146). Buddhism addresses this problem through the practice of meditation, which serves to train the mind and bring the practitioner more fully into the

present moment. A common focus of meditation is simply the in and out flow of the breath (Johnson, 2004). By continually and gently bringing attention back to the breath, practitioners train in letting go of memories, fantasies, and thoughts and coming back to the present moment. As the practitioner relates with the ever-impermanent movement of the breath, she or he also realizes experientially the teaching of the impermanence of each thought and feeling (Johnson, 2004), as well as the ever-shifting, fluid nature of the self and experience.

In addition to cultivating mindful presence, the practice of meditation also serves to increase self-awareness. As Steele (2004) eloquently put it, “sitting meditation... is where the hard insights come” (p. 78). This dimension of Buddhist practice can be applied directly to unlearning racism.

Native American, Buddhist practitioner and associate professor at the University of New Mexico, Bonnie Duran (2004) wrote that intensive meditation practice has helped her uncover her internalized racism, as well as illuminate the workings of racism in social and professional interactions. Duran added that being able to see more clearly the nuances of racism has helped her resist and counteract their negative impact.

In addition to working with internalized racism, meditation can also assist with uncovering one’s own racial bias. Steele (2004) stated the importance of this work in this way: “This work is something we all have to do. We all have to examine the shadow we all carry as part of this society before we can heal our unintended racism” (p. 77). As the stillness of meditation allows self-awareness to arise, practitioners are able to see their habitual patterns more clearly and examine this shadow more closely.

Duran (2004) went further to say that not only does meditation uncover one's fearful, internal stories, meditation actually allows the tendency towards bias, racism, and self-hate to "float away" as negative emotions are replaced with skillful means (p. 168). Willis (2004) has also written about the capability of meditation to transform negative emotions into positive ones.

Current research involving the Dalai Lama has further illuminated how meditation can transform negative emotions and bring increased happiness (Goleman, 2003). For a good review of how the scientific community is researching the benefits of meditation, please see the work of the Mind and Life Institute published in Goleman (2003). The physical benefits of meditation are also becoming clearer through work focusing on mindfulness and stress reduction. Please see the groundbreaking work of Kabat-Zinn and others in Samuelson, Carmody, Kabat-Zinn and Bratt (2007).

In summary, just as meditation is a new frontier in scientific research on emotional and physical well-being, meditation remains a largely unexplored, untapped resource in curricula for unlearning racism, despite anecdotal evidence pointing to its potency. As Ferguson (2004) so eloquently articulated, "the teachings and practice of meditation allow us to activate the intimate yet public connection of the personal and the political. Outer change proceeds alongside inner revolution" (p. 97).

Loving-kindness practices. In addition to meditation, Buddhist teachings have outlined various loving-kindness practices that could be applied to the process of unlearning racism. In a traditional Buddhist practice called the Four Limitless Qualities, practitioners meditate on a text in order to extend loving-kindness to all sentient beings (Chödrön, 2002). The chant is as follows:

May all sentient beings enjoy happiness and the root of happiness.
May they be free from suffering and the root of suffering.
May they not be separated from the great happiness devoid of suffering.
May they dwell in the great equanimity free from passion, aggression, and prejudice. (Chödrön, 2002, p. 37)

Practitioners are instructed to mentally repeat these words beginning with the intention of extending this loving-kindness towards themselves and the ones that they love. The next step is to continue repeating the lines with the intention of extending towards neutral people in their lives. Finally, practitioners extend these words towards people in their lives whom they actively dislike (Chödrön, 2002).

Another loving-kindness practice called tonglen involves breathing in the suffering of others and breathing out relief from suffering (Chödrön, 2001). Although not typically used in this way, these practices could easily be adapted to work specifically with an individual's racial intolerance and begin actively counteracting racial bias that he or she may have.

Visualizations. An African-American Buddhist teacher and scholar, Jan Willis, has done significant work in exploring how Buddhist practices could effectively be applied to working with internalized racism, and she currently teaches a series of workshops which use meditation to transform prejudice. In an interview with Pintak (2001), Willis articulated her belief that the Buddhist message of basic purity offers a tool for working with internalized racism and improving self-esteem. She said, "I truly believe that Buddhism—especially tantric Buddhism, because visualization is so central to this method—is something that can help us re-envision ourselves, help us put down this heavy weight we carry around with us" (Pintak, 2001, Fourth section, ¶ 4).

In her book, *Dreaming me: From Baptist to Buddhist, one woman's spiritual Journey*, Willis (2001) described Buddhist practices in which individuals visualize themselves as being infinitely courageous, compassionate, and wise, with the goal of bringing forth these positive qualities that already exist within them. In this way, habitual negative patterns can clear, as each person's Buddha nature shines through.

For more information about work being done in Buddhist communities around racism and inclusiveness, please see the document, *Making the invisible visible: Healing racism in our sanghas*, compiled by the Diversity Council of Spirit Rock Meditation Center (2001) and available online as part of the Spirit Rock Meditation Center website at <http://www.spiritrock.org/display.asp?pageid=318&catid=2&scatid=31>.

Healing the Effects of Racism in the Body

Effects of Racism in the Body

Because the legacy of racism has relied heavily on the arbitrary assignment of value to physical characteristics, such as skin color, facial features, and even body type, it is especially important to examine how the effects of racism live in the body itself. Manuel (2004) wrote about the need for people of color “to eliminate a sense of inferiority that pervaded our bodies” (p.39). She also acknowledged the suffering she has experienced in her own life because she “felt isolated in a dark body” (p. 41). Especially because research is finding that the stress of racism may negatively impact the body (Hill et al., 2007), it is vital to include the body as a resource for unlearning the effects of racism.

Mindfulness of Body

Buddhist teachings have placed special emphasis on the importance of working with the body in order to gain insight, wisdom, and enlightenment (Moffitt, 2007). Longtime Buddhist teacher and practitioner, Phillip Moffitt (2007) has stated that emphasizing body awareness is especially important for Western students who tend to engage in Buddhism through conceptualization. He highlighted the idea that individuals are “embodied consciousness,” and cautioned that excluding the body from meditation practice greatly limited developing insight (p. 46).

Furthermore, Moffitt (2007) has outlined methods for engaging in direct, physical experience of the body, rather than remaining in intellectual observation. To illustrate the difference, he offered a simple exercise in two parts. In the first part, the practitioner is instructed to look at his or her own hand, notice the shape and length of the fingers and palm, and observe the details of the skin and bones. In the second part, the practitioner is instructed to close his or her eyes and move one hand in space, allow the wrist to move, and curl each finger. Through comparing such exercises, a student can experience the difference between intellectual observation of the body and the direct experience of embodiment.

Moffitt (2007) has posited that this kind of direct mindfulness of body is important because the body is “the storehouse of all the physical and emotional events of [one’s] life to this point” (p. 49). Relaxed awareness of the physical sensations of emotions and memories allows the charge of the sensations to dissipate. In this way, vibrations, heat or pressure may release as “purification happens spontaneously” (p. 49).

Finally, mindfulness of body cultivates nonreactivity as practitioners learn to stay

with both pleasant and unpleasant sensations as they arise, without trying to cling to or push away the experience. Thus, the body is a powerful gateway to the present moment, and mindful presence allows individuals to consciously participate in each moment of their lives. Mindfulness of body is “a way of meeting life that reflects [one’s] deepest values” (Moffitt, 2007, p. 110).

Although Moffitt did not talk about applying these insights about body awareness to unlearning racism, the applications are numerous. If the body is indeed “the storehouse of all the physical and emotional events of [one’s] life” (Moffitt, 2007, p. 49), the effects of internalized racism and internalized dominance will live in the body and may be accessed through the body most directly. Becoming aware of the physical sensations of the emotions and memories related to racism may be an important first step in releasing the intensity of these feelings and beginning to heal.

I would propose that practicing mindfulness of body as a way to cultivate nonreactivity could be an invaluable tool in the arduous journey of unlearning racism. By increasing tolerance for unpleasant physical and emotional sensations, individuals can cultivate curiosity and fearlessness in examining internalized dominance and internalized oppression. Learning to tolerate intense feelings, such as fear, shame, and guilt is imperative if individuals are to move forward in the important and difficult work of healing the effects of racism.

Additionally, Moffitt (2007) made the connection that the nonreactivity and sense of presence cultivated by mindfulness of body allows practitioners to act with greater choice in each moment rather than through habitual patterns. This idea also holds numerous applications to unlearning racism work, particularly when it comes to

counteracting the negative racial stereotypes that individuals hold about themselves or others. Learning how to make new choices in each moment with regards to racial inclusivity, tolerance, and celebration is an integral aspect of “meeting life [in a way] that reflects [one’s] deepest values” (Moffitt, 2007, p. 110).

Healing Ancestors

Relating with ancestors. In a sense, the body carries the physical legacy of oppression and privilege that each person experiences. Nghiem (2004) vividly described her blackness as “fear, insecurity on a cellular level, transmitted by [her] ancestors” (p.121). With this awareness, the literature written by Buddhist practitioners of color has frequently emphasized the importance of relating with one’s ancestors (Hanh, 2004; Manuel, 2004). In the highly individualistic culture of the United States, relating with one’s ancestors is rare encouragement, and Benzamin-Miki (2004) stated the imperative in this way:

We all have a family history that makes up a great part of who we are, whether we agree with what our ancestors did or not. We suffer when we cannot see a part of ourselves or when we disown a part of our history... whether that history was born out of oppression or privilege. (p. 81)

Touching the earth. Alice Walker (2004) further emphasized that Buddhism “is good medicine for healing us so that we may engage in the work of healing our ancestors... [who] can only be healed inside of us” (p. 200). A practice taught by Thich Nhat Hanh called Touching the Earth allows practitioners to heal the suffering in their relationships with ancestors and to strengthen the goodness that they have received from them (Nghiem, 2004).

Sister Chan Chau Nghiem (2004), a nun in the Vietnamese Zen tradition, has written movingly about how this practice has helped heal some of the effects of racism in her life. Born to a white father and a black mother, Nghiem wrote about doing the Touching the Earth practice for her white, paternal grandfather whose racism had greatly impacted her life. In doing the practice, she repeated these words internally: “Breathing in, granddad, I am here for you. Breathing out, I will take good care of you in me” (p. 118). What Nghiem experienced next has given words to how body-based practices can shift the effects of racism on a deep level. Nghiem wrote:

Soon I was in tears. Up came a very deep, old hurt of feeling rejected, discriminated against, unloved because of my skin color. It was very painful. But I had never embraced this pain with my mindfulness before. It had just been lying there, stuck in my consciousness. Now it could circulate freely, massaged by mindful breathing. I held my pain... with tenderness and love and allowed the hot tears to flow down my cheeks. (p. 118)

As Nghiem (2004) continued this practice, she gained newfound empathy for her grandfather and realized that he had not wanted to be the way that he'd been and that he had suffered greatly because of his rigid views about race. The practice increased Nghiem's feeling of connection with her grandfather and she felt an ability to “transform the many generations of suffering in [her] family” (p. 119). Nghiem specifically described the effects of this breathing-based practice in her body, writing that “it was so beautiful to feel this love, this comforting and full warmth spreading through my chest, finally releasing this heavy burden of ignorance, separation, and pain. In its place I felt a lightness (p. 119).

Through body-based practices such as Touching the Earth, individuals can shift the effects of racism, not only psychologically and emotionally, but actually physically in

the body. Furthermore, sensations in the body can offer insight into how to navigate the difficult journey of healing racism. As Baldoquín (2004) has offered, “our body allows us to experience those places where our work needs to happen” (p. 184).

Conclusion

In reviewing the available literature relating Buddhism to anti-racism work, the most notable gap lies in the absence of writing by white Buddhist practitioners interested in working with their privilege and internalized dominance through spiritual practice. In many ways, this absence in the literature reflects the larger societal absence of prominent white allies and the lack of socially-sanctioned pressure for white people to address and unlearn racism. Both the invisibility of privilege and the myth that systemic racism has no cost for white people have served to isolate people of color in addressing the issue of racism, often with little input from members of the dominant culture.

Similarly, there is little in the anti-racism literature that focuses on white people drawing on spiritual practice to support and inform their journeys of working with their racial bias. It is interesting to note that there may be more literature available encouraging people of color to draw on spiritual resources to counteract being targeted by racism, than literature encouraging white people to use spirituality to support their work of unlearning racism. (See Cross, 1991.) In some ways, this trend reinforces the misperception that white people do not suffer from the system of racism and that they are not in need of spiritual resources in doing anti-racism work.

While little empirical research is available, anecdotal evidence in anti-racism literature has suggested that some white allies are drawing on spiritual resources. Ring

(2000) has stated that in his work as an anti-racism trainer, it has been essential for him to understand “the role of spirituality and ritual in healing” (p. 79).

The available literature on applying Buddhism to anti-racism work appears to barely scratch the surface of how Buddhist practices and teachings may inform unlearning racism, especially for members of the dominant culture. It is possible that Buddhist techniques of working with the heart and mind and increasing self-awareness may hold untapped resources in the deeply personal journey of unlearning racism, but at this time little seems to be known. By gathering insights of individuals interested in Buddhism and anti-racism work, my research has tried to increase our limited understanding as to the applicability of Buddhist teachings and practices to healing the effects of racism.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

My study explored the application of Buddhist philosophy and practices to unlearning racism and anti-racism work. The research was a fixed method, descriptive, qualitative study, in which participants were asked several questions related to Buddhism and anti-racism work via an e-mailed survey.

I chose the survey format because I wanted to gather descriptive, qualitative data on how individuals were applying Buddhism to anti-racism work. By using e-mail, I was able to quickly reach participants all over the country and abroad, using a method that minimized inconvenience and time commitment on the part of participants. In this way, I hoped to obtain data from a greater number of participants than I would have if I'd conducted longer, verbal interviews. For more details about the study, please see Appendix A for my Human Subjects Review Application.

Sample

My inclusion criteria were that participants be individuals interested in anti-racism work, who professed a personal connection to Buddhist teachings and/or practices such as meditation. Participants also needed to be able to read and write English comfortably and be over eighteen years of age. These were the only inclusion criteria, and participants were not excluded on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, or any other factor. My desired sample size was 20 or more participants.

The method for sample selection was snowball, and names of potential participants were acquired through the recommendations of other participants. In addition, I spoke to numerous friends, acquaintances, and colleagues about the project and asked if they could recommend anyone who fit the inclusion criteria. I also contacted individuals whom I had met in the past who were interested in Buddhism and anti-racism work, and I contacted authors whom I had come across in my research, who had published on these subjects. Additionally, I e-mailed several Buddhist and anti-racism organizations, such as Spirit Rock Meditation Center, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, and UNtraining, asking if they could recommend potential participants. In all, I sent out over 55 e-mails.

Data Collection

When I identified a potential participant, I contacted him or her, mostly through e-mail, and confirmed that he or she met the selection criteria and had an interest in participating in the study. Twenty-eight individuals agreed to participate and I sent each an informed consent form, detailing the study and outlining confidentiality.

Because I realized that some participants might have been publishing on this topic and might wish to have their names associated with their ideas, I offered participants the option of waiving confidentiality. In the informed consent form, I carefully outlined the risks that could be involved in waiving confidentiality and I emphasized that participants were in no way required to waive confidentiality.

For the first 25 potential participants, I mailed each individual two copies of an informed consent form: one to review and keep, and one to sign and return to me in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. For the last three potential participants, I was

nearing the end of my data collection, and in the interest of time, I e-mailed these individuals the informed consent letter and they mailed a signed copy back to me. This method greatly reduced the time delay that had occurred with many of the other participants, especially those on the west coast. Please see Appendix B for the Informed Consent Form.

Twenty-four individuals mailed back the signed informed consent form. I then sent each of them the survey via e-mail. Participants opened the e-mail attachment, typed their answers to the questionnaire, and e-mailed the attachment back to me. Although participants had the option of responding to the survey through a hard-copy sent through the mail, all participants chose to respond via e-mail. Twenty-one participants returned the survey.

Data Collection Instrument

The instrument of assessment was a brief survey, consisting of several questions about applying Buddhism to unlearning racism and anti-racism work. I collected demographic data, with regards to gender, race/ethnicity, Buddhist tradition with which the participant most identified, length of time practicing or studying Buddhism, any other religious or spiritual identities, and any education or work relevant to Buddhism or anti-racism. (See Appendix C.)

On the survey, I also asked each participant for his or her name and whether or not he or she wanted to waive confidentiality. Of the 21 participants, eight chose to remain confidential and 13 chose to waive confidentiality.

The questions in the survey were framed to ask about the following themes: (a) how Buddhist practices and teachings might relate to anti-racism work; (b) how Buddhist

practices and teachings support the individual's own personal journey of unlearning the effects of racism; and (c) whether the individual knows of any body-based, Buddhist practices that could be applied to unlearning the effects of racism in the body. (See Appendixes D through G for additional materials, including sample e-mail and phone introductions, a sample follow-up e-mail, referral sources, and the Human Subjects Review Approval Letter.)

Once I gathered the 21 surveys, I did content analysis through coding. I reviewed all the participants' responses and looked for common themes and concepts, as well as idiosyncratic ones.

Limitations

The process of finding participants for the study was more difficult than I had previously thought it would be. The selection criteria were fairly narrow and it was not easy to find participants who fit the criteria. In retrospect, it would have been more efficient to send out the majority of e-mails in the first few days of data collection, rather than sending them out gradually over time. Additionally, it would have been easier to contact the meditation centers and anti-racism organizations earlier on so as to get more leads in the beginning.

I was also surprised by the time delay in using the postal service to mail self-addressed stamped envelopes and hard copies of the informed consent forms to each participant to sign and return to me. Especially for those participants on the west coast, it could take up to a couple weeks before I received participants' informed consent forms back through the mail. For the last three participants, I e-mailed them informed consent forms and they each promptly printed them out and returned them to me. I was surprised

by how much easier and faster this method was and how participants did not seem deterred by paying the postage themselves. If repeating the study, I would consider offering participants this choice from the beginning.

By conducting the research via e-mailed surveys, I was able to minimize the inconvenience and time commitment on the part of participants and this may have allowed me to gather a larger sample size. However, because it was a fixed method, I was unable to ask participants follow-up questions or for further elaboration. This limited the amount of detail in the data. Conducting the research via e-mail also limited the personal gratification that participants might have received from a face-to-face or phone interview. In an attempt to offer more of this personal gratification, I did send an e-mail to participants after they returned their surveys, thanking them for their insights and contributions.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The Buddhist teaching most frequently reported by participants as relevant to unlearning racism and anti-racism work was compassion. Many participants also responded that Buddhist teachings on interconnection, no self, and emptiness impacted their approach to anti-racism work. Additionally, Buddhist philosophy regarding suffering and karma proved relevant, as well as teachings pertaining to human nature, such as undoing conditioning, basic goodness, and ego.

Meditation was the Buddhist practice most frequently applied by participants to unlearning racism. Participants also highlighted tonglen and other loving-kindness meditation practices, as well as body-based meditation as important for healing the effects of racism.

While some participants underscored the relevance of Buddhist tools for unlearning racism even when the tools were not specifically designated for this application, other participants described how they found Buddhism to be ambivalent about activism and argued that Buddhism may not actually apply to some forms of anti-racism work. Several participants offered a critique of American Buddhism in particular, and others offered thoughtful disagreements with the language used in the survey. The findings section will conclude with diverse insights that participants offered with regards to their application of Buddhism to unlearning racism. A section giving demographic data about the participants will precede an in depth exploration of the findings.

Demographics

Of the 21 participants, three identified as male and 18 as female, one of whom identified as “female, genderqueer soft butch trans woman.” Nineteen participants identified as white, two of whom also identified as Jewish. One participant identified as Latina/Sephardic Jewish, and another identified as Japanese American.

With regards to the Buddhist tradition or lineage with which participants most identified, nine reported Tibetan Buddhism in the lineages of Kagyu, Nyingma, or Shambhala; eight reported Vipassana; two reported Zen; one reported Theravadan; one reported Vipassana and Zen; and one reported not identifying with a particular tradition but drawing inspiration from Zen, Vipassana, and Mahayana Buddhism.

The length of time that participants had practiced or studied Buddhism ranged from one and a half years to 32 years. Ten participants had practiced for less than ten years; seven participants had practiced from between ten and 19 years; and four participants had practiced from between 20 and 32 years.

Based on where participants asked me to mail the informed consent form, 14 individuals lived in the northeast, three in northern California, two in the mid-Atlantic region, one in Canada, and one in Germany. Both individuals living outside the United States were Americans and their responses reflected the significant time that they had spent in the United States.

Major Findings

Buddhist Teachings Relevant to Healing Racism

Compassion. The Buddhist teaching of compassion emerged as a major theme among participants’ responses. Nearly half of participants cited the Buddhist teachings on

compassion for themselves and others as important to their anti-racism work. Janet Carter, a white Buddhist practitioner of 32 years who is also involved with UNtraining, a program for “untraining” white liberal racism, cited compassion as “essential for really being able to confront racism in both oneself and the world.”

A related theme that five participants highlighted was how Buddhism encouraged gentleness or compassion with themselves when they made mistakes. When asked about Buddhist teachings relevant to anti-racism work, one participant replied in this way:

Compassion: this has certainly helped me with having compassion for myself with my own internalized racism and with having compassion for myself when I "make mistakes" related to racism...what I mean by this is that in the past I would really beat myself up psychologically if I did something that I deemed "wrong" as an anti-racist white person, and now, I still examine and try to respond differently in similar situations, but I don't get as hooked on the need to be in control, to be "perfect"...I have compassion for where I am at, that I am unenlightened and am very much in the process of unlearning racism!

By cultivating compassion towards themselves in the journey of unlearning racism, several white participants reported that more compassion was possible with others, including other whites struggling with their own racism. Joshua Miller, a long-term anti-racism activist and teacher in the Smith College School for Social Work, who also draws inspiration from various Buddhist traditions, made this point simply by stating, “the gentler I can be with myself, the gentler I am with others in working with them to help them unlearn racism and own their own stuff.”

Cooper Thompson, another Buddhist practitioner who has worked for over 20 years as a consultant for VISIONS, a group specializing in diversity training, further elaborated on the link between compassion for oneself and compassion for those acting with racism. He described his personal process in this way:

I have found that compassion is particularly important and useful for me when I am working with other white men. At one point in my anti-racist work, about 20 years ago, I was quite angry with white men like myself and kept my distance from other white men. Of course, I also was angry with the white man that I was, but I couldn't see that at the time. (Rejecting one's own identity is a common feature in identity development theories, and I have often met people in this phase of their own identity development.) But through developing my compassion for myself and other white men, I have been relatively successful in finding ways to challenge my own and other white men's oppressive behavior without shaming or rejecting them as human beings.

Interconnection. Another major finding in the research was how participants applied the Buddhist teaching of interconnection to unlearning racism. Seven participants cited the Buddhist idea interconnectedness as important for anti-racism work. One participant stated that, "when we know we are all one, we act from that knowledge and teach others from that place as well." Joshua Miller went further to highlight that "Buddhism stresses how we are all connected and that divisions are illusions."

A related theme that two participants mentioned was the Buddhist concept of interdependency. One white participant reported, "The idea that how I relate to others impacts me, forms me, and affects me on not just a subtle level is important in thinking about why anti-racism work is important."

Emptiness/no self. Buddhist teachings on emptiness and the lack of a coherent, enduring self formed another major theme that six participants highlighted. Anraku Hondorp, a white Zen priest, who has co-led multicultural and white privilege workshops and trained with VISIONS, articulated the application of these teachings by saying, "Addressing the constructed self, seeing the emptiness within the form, not attaching to false views.....these Buddhist teachings open us up to the real truth of who we really are which is not separate from this moment or each other."

Suffering. Several participants also referenced Buddhist teachings on the nature of suffering as important to anti-racism work. Anraku Hondorp described the relevance with the following:

In truly waking up to the suffering of the world through deep inquiry and meditative practice, it is impossible to not feel the suffering on both sides of oppression, racism and injustice. The first Noble Truth in Buddhism is that life is suffering. To really feel this leads one to act to address this in oneself and in the world.

Joshua Miller further elaborated the relevance of these teachings to racial justice work, saying that “Mahayana Buddhism reminds me that suffering is not inevitable and exhorts me to do work to ease the suffering of all sentient beings.”

Karma. Four participants referred to Buddhist teachings on karma as relevant to anti-racism work. From a larger perspective, Anraku Hondorp, related, “I feel that racism in this country is the deepest karmic wound we have as a nation.” On a personal level, one white Theravadan participant stated that “[Buddhist] practice has also taught me that I must take full responsibility for my own actions, words, and thoughts. In body, speech and mind... Whatever karma I do, I live inside of that, in body, speech, and mind.”

Undoing conditioning. A major theme that several participants highlighted as important to anti-racism work was the Buddhist teaching on undoing conditioning. While Buddhism teaches that the fundamental nature of human beings is awake, the teachings recognize that individuals are conditioned to think and behave in more confused and destructive ways. Janet Carter described the application of this concept to unlearning racism by saying:

We are conditioned in so many ways around race in this country, subtle unconscious ways as well as institutionalized policies and practices. But, white

people especially are not aware of this. Sitting meditation with the intention of seeing oppressive thoughts and patterns is very powerful.

When asked if Buddhist teachings related to her personal journey of unlearning racism, another participant reported the following:

Yes: undoing conditioning. I heard a teacher once say that the practice of meditation is about aligning the conditioned mind with the nature of the unconditioned – it is accepting, clear, bright, awake, and just present. Also the practice of meditation gives me a lot of experience in choosing my response to my own conditioning. I don't have to believe all those thoughts that are conditioned into me. For instance, I might see a person of color in a room full of white people and automatically think, "Oh, she must hate it here," or even worse, "What is she doing here?" But because of my practice of mindfulness, I can see that thought before it becomes a word, action, attitude or mood, and choose how I want to respond to it... And just seeing that as a conditioned thought...I don't have to form this whole identity around it like, "I'm racist," or "I'm a bad white person" or "I'm better than people of color," etc. At the same time, though, I do want to think about this thought, and maybe try to trace the roots of it to a previous experience or belief, because that's the undoing.

Basic goodness. The Buddhist concept of basic goodness refers to the fundamental awake quality of human beings underneath their conditioning. One white participant reported that holding that individuals are "fundamentally enlightened" has allowed her to connect with a sense of possibility as she does anti-racism work with other white people.

Janet Carter further elaborated that "another important point is seeing the buddhanature or basic unconditioned goodness in everyone. This undercuts the tendency to see others as 'bad racist people' and oneself as a 'good white person.' We are all in this together. Interconnected." In this way, white people doing anti-racism work may be able to work compassionately and non-judgmentally with other white people who struggle with their racist conditioning.

Ego. Another theme that emerged in the findings as relevant to anti-racism work was the Buddhist teachings on ego. One white participant articulated that in her own journey of unlearning racism, it has been important for her to believe that there is something “greater than [her] own ego and feelings of comfort.” Another white participant cited that Buddhist teachings about ego have helped with her deal with performance anxiety when she is in a leadership role, encouraging other white people in anti-racism work.

Michelle Esther O’Brien, a white Buddhist practitioner in the Tibetan Nyingma and Kagyu lineages, who has done extensive work over 12 years in racial justice organizing, brought interesting elaboration on the importance of working with ego when doing anti-racism work. As O’Brien worked in white ally anti-racism over several years, she became disillusioned with the framework she was using. When she began practicing Buddhism, her approach radically changed. She related the following:

I became critical of how I and other white people actually used anti-racist rhetoric to further advance our own political careers, gain social status over other white people, and maintain our privilege and authority in organizing spaces. The writings of Trungpa Rinpoche... along with sitting meditation, played a pivotal role in challenging me. Trungpa Rinpoche’s *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* identified how even Buddhism could be enlisted in the grip of ego; I realized I had done the exact same thing with radical anti-racist thought.

O’Brien further elaborated this important insight in this way:

Through my Buddhist practice, I have come to realize how I found ways of reproducing white privilege even in the ways that I spoke about anti-racism. Buddhism draws attention to ego and the myriad of diverse strategies ego uses to reinscribe its central role in shaping our realities. Through these teachings, I’ve been able to move against an arrogant notion that anti-racism was a single way of looking I could easily learn and exhibit to increase my own social status, and towards a process of constant, transformative, loving questioning of myself and others. Using Buddhist practice to ease the tenacious grip of ego opens up the room to actually listen to other people, a crucial step in anti-racist consciousness

for white people... I began to realize that sincerity, honesty, warm heartedness, and humility were at least as important as having the right-on critique.

Buddhist Practices Relevant to Healing Racism

Meditation. The Buddhist practice of mindfulness meditation emerged as a major theme among participants' responses. Twelve participants cited meditation or mindfulness as useful in anti-racism work or unlearning racism. One white participant related, "a lot of my biggest insights and awareness about racism have occurred through my meditation practice." Joshua Miller added, "I think that mindfulness and meditation allow us to be true and open to all that is inside and outside of us. So meditating regularly helps to recognize, accept and transform internalized racism." A third white participant agreed, saying that "the practice of sitting with discomfort (or sitting with 'whatever comes up') is incredibly relevant to unlearning internalized and 'externalized' racism and other forms of oppression."

Participants reported numerous benefits of applying meditation to unlearning racism, including increasing non-judgmental awareness; gaining awareness of one's own reactions, emotions, biases, and prejudices; and even becoming more aware of and better able to work with white defensiveness and white guilt.

Tonglen and loving-kindness meditation. Other Buddhist practices that participants cited as relevant to anti-racism work were the practices of tonglen and other loving-kindness meditations. Six participants referenced the importance of tonglen, which works with the breath to take in the suffering of others and to send out relief from suffering. Alexis Shotwell, a white Tibetan Buddhist of 17 years related the following:

The practice of tonglen has been really central to my attempts to directly and honestly meet the unsettledness, pain, and rage I find in racial inequity and my

own whiteness, and to be able to continue working with things in a deeply imperfect world.

Another white participant added the following from her personal experience:

I find that the practice of tonglen can relate very much to racial justice work. Consistently practicing compassion towards oneself and others is in itself healing, as well as builds a foundation from whence you can act [with] compassion.

Another participant related that tonglen allows practitioners to dismantle the walls separating themselves from others. She added that the practice “wakes us up to our own soft spots and starts to allow us to interact with people from a less-defended... position.”

Another three participants spoke more generally about loving-kindness meditation or Metta practices as useful for cultivating compassion. One white participant added that he found loving-kindness exercises particularly helpful when applied to people who were oppressing others. Another white Vipassana practitioner of over 20 years related that “practices such as Vipassana metta practice are excellent for reinforcing compassion and healing toward all others.”

Body-based meditation. When asked about body-based Buddhist practices that could be applied to healing the effects of racism in the body, participants gave a wide range of answers. Several referenced tonglen, which has a physical element to it, because of its use of the breath. Another recommended body scans, in which awareness is brought to each part of the body. Another participant referenced deep listening and dyad exercises.

Several participants highlighted how sitting meditation can be done in a way that brings awareness to physical sensations and shifts patterns at the body level. Anraku Hondorp described the practice of Zen sitting meditation, or Zazen, in this way:

Particularly for me doing Zazen is primary: dropping the thoughts that separate, into the energy held in my body beneath the shame or blame or labeling, to take a few breaths, completely present, to recognize that however uncomfortable it is that I can stay and to let it pass, is all very helpful at releasing the body from the unconscious patterns that I have anesthetized myself from.

Janet Carter, who has worked with UNtraining White Liberal Racism for many years, referenced a multidimensional meditation practice that is used in UNtraining for unlearning the effects of racism in the body. She related that this “multi-dimensional awareness practice... cultivates awareness of what is going on in the body, mind, and emotions and holding all that in the space of basic goodness.” Swan Keyes, who is the Community and Multicultural Program Manager for Spirit Rock Meditation Center and a Racial Justice educator for UNtraining, also cited this multidimensional meditation practice, which was developed by Rita Shimmin, as useful for unlearning racism and helping participants to hold more than one reality at a time.

It is significant to note that nearly half of participants reported that they were not familiar with any body-based Buddhist practices relevant to unlearning racism, or they left the question blank.

Other Findings

Relevance of Buddhist Tools

Michelle Esther O’Brien illuminated the idea that Buddhist teachings could be applied directly to unlearning racism, even if Buddhist teachers were not making this connection. Although Pema Chödrön has rarely taught about anti-racism work, O’Brien made the point that Chödrön’s teachings were directly relevant. O’Brien related the following:

For white people working on our racism, I draw a great deal of insight from the writing of Pema Chödrön about staying with discomfort. I've found her writing more relevant than anything else I have ever read by a white person in offering a range of strategies and insights for unlearning racism. Confronting racism brings up a tremendous amount of anxiety, confusion, and discomfort for myself and many other white people. Chödrön offers tools for not retreating from this discomfort in our habitual patterns. These habitual patterns, for white people, are profoundly inscribed in white supremacy and white privilege. Chödrön goes on to show many ways that habitual patterns can create the conditions for us to inflict pain on other people, a crucial analytical piece for understanding the negative impact of white privilege. Chödrön does an excellent job of showing how mindfulness and sitting meditation can help untangle these habitual patterns by encouraging us to lean into negative emotions as they come up. I have used her work to understand the value of sitting meditation and other forms of Buddhist practice to anti-racist work for white people... Being able to listen with an open heart, being willing to stay with discomfort, challenging my habitual patterns, and questioning my own assumed world views have been crucial throughout my antiracist organizing.

Buddhist Ambivalence about Activism

Several participants stated that while Buddhist teachings provided support for unlearning racism at the personal level, the teachings did not lend themselves to larger scale activism or social change. One participant put it this way, "Since Buddhism seems to have a profoundly ambivalent relationship to activism and structural oppression, I think it is really most effective on the individual level." Michelle Esther O'Brien echoed this sentiment, saying that while Buddhism had been extremely helpful in her personal work, she had "not found Buddhism very helpful to understand privilege, power, and domination as social realities." Swan Keyes added that she believed "that spiritual enlightenment [did] not guarantee social consciousness."

While several participants cited the Buddhist teachings about karma as useful in anti-racism work, another participant indicated that this teaching may actually discourage activism. She put her insight in this way:

My understanding of Buddhism is that those things that we see around us as structural racism and other kinds of structural oppression are considered to be the result of our own karma and that the antidote is practice, helping others without harming, and not necessarily activism.

Critique of American Buddhism

A theme emerged in the findings which presented criticism of how American Buddhism has handled issues of race and racism. Four participants cited concerns they had about Buddhist communities in the United States. One participant related, “I think American Buddhism remains a little naïve about race.” Another participant, Peggy Gillespie, who has been practicing Buddhism for over 30 years, added that most Buddhist retreats are mostly white and that Western Buddhism has only recently begun focusing on diversity training and offering retreats for people of color.

Swan Keyes spoke frankly about this issue, saying

In my experience white Buddhist teachers are usually unaware of their cultural conditioning and are resistant to examining racial training that they have received and unconscious racism that they perpetuate. They tend to want to do a spiritual bypass (“we’re all one” blah blah blah). All of the Western convert Buddhist organizations I have come in contact with perpetuate unconscious racism. Many white liberal Buddhists are quite attached to their identities as “good, aware people” and are thus unable to see themselves as part of a social structure that hold whites in power (in govt, finance, education, etc). This is due in part to the dichotomous thinking that one is either racist or good.

Alicia Ohs, a Japanese American Buddhist practitioner, activist, and organizer, related that as a woman of color, anti-racism work was a daily part of her experience and how she related to society. She stated that “the lack of racial awareness in many ‘progressive’ communities in the US (Buddhist, liberal, yoga, environmental issue, and mainly white privileged communities) has made the work necessary and sometimes difficult.”

When asked about the relevance of Buddhism to anti-racism work, Ohs went on to explain, “There are many lessons that CAN be relevant, but unfortunately, most Western Buddhism is taught in a way that racism, [anti-racism], and specifically-privilege is not addressed.”

While many white participants cited the Buddhist concept of undoing conditioning as relevant to their processes of unlearning racism, Ohs related that when white teachers without awareness of systemic racism apply this teaching to people of color, the results can be quite damaging. Ohs described her difficulties in relating with one of her Buddhist teachers in this way:

When I [stated] that my “story” of my identity was directly related to my emotions and therefore my practice, I was consistently told that I needed to “drop my story.” And while I do believe it is important for [people of color] to have a safe space to explore the construction of race... when a white male privileged teacher tells you to drop your story without healing or examination (almost, in a sense that you can “white wash” your life and forget your history) that, in itself, is a form of oppression, not a form of advancing the practice. It is one of the ways that Western Buddhism HAS NOT been applied to western racism.

Ohs went on to add that she believes people of color can use Buddhist practice to work with “dropping their stories” and examining their identities, but that such endeavors require teachers to have skillful means, which are often lacking.

Buddhism Not Applicable to Anti-Racism Work

One participant, who has worked for some time as the director of a grassroots community organizing project and has practiced Buddhism off-and-on for ten years, reported that he had no experience applying Buddhism to anti-racism work or unlearning racism. He added that he doesn’t believe any individual project will help someone unlearn racism and that it is only through relationships that this is possible.

Interestingly, nearly half of the white participants mentioned that close relationships with people of color have been instrumental in either bringing them to anti-racism work or furthering their journeys of unlearning racism.

Language

Several participants offered feedback on the language used in the survey. One participant referenced how the term “anti-racism” did not feel in keeping with Buddhist principles, because the term implied a sense of opposition and conflict. Two participants also disagreed with the term “unlearning racism.” They stated that it was impossible for someone to *unlearn* racism; although, someone could learn to notice prejudice in oneself and choose not to act on it.

Final Insights

The applications that participants made of Buddhism to anti-racism work and unlearning racism were numerous and varied. Many were mentioned by only one or two participants and so fell outside the major findings. Buddhist teachings that participants cited as relevant to anti-racism work included skillful means, presence, right conduct, seeing things as they are, impermanence, teachings on the relative/absolute, creating a just world, non-attachment, generosity, beginner’s mind, groundlessness, wakefulness, and the three tenets of the Zen Peacemakers: Not Knowing, Bearing Witness, and Healing Actions.

Participants also related that Buddhist practice was useful in providing skills for better communication and better listening, as well as learning how to hold the mind. Participants added that Buddhism was useful for individuals in learning to center themselves and lower their reactivity. Participants also stated that Buddhism can provide

a safe container for the difficult emotions that arise when doing work to heal the effects of racism.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The most important contribution of my research is in giving voice to the insights of white Buddhist practitioners on how Buddhism informs their anti-racism work. This application of Buddhist philosophy and practices to white people struggling with their racism has gone largely unrecorded and available literature appears to be quite limited.

This chapter will explore the contributions of my findings, focusing on new applications of the Buddhist teachings of compassion, basic goodness, ego, habitual patterns and undoing conditioning, as well as Buddhist practices, such as meditation and loving-kindness practices. The chapter will then outline recommendations for social workers from the dominant culture, limitations of the study, suggestions for further research and a final summary.

Contributions of the Findings

Compassion

In my findings, white participants offered new applications of Buddhist teachings on compassion to anti-racism work. White respondents frequently underscored the necessity of compassion for themselves when their thoughts and actions did not measure up to their anti-racism ideals. Although participants emphasized taking personal responsibility for their actions, they reported that gentleness towards themselves when they made mistakes was key in allowing deeper inquiry into their racist beliefs and reducing burn-out.

Additionally, white participants reported that by opening to more compassion for themselves, more compassion was possible for other white people struggling with their racism. Rather than shaming and rejecting white people whom they saw acting with racism, white respondents reported that extending with compassion had the potential to help these individuals move towards unlearning racism.

Basic Goodness

Similarly, white participants in my study reported that Buddhist teachings on basic goodness or Buddha nature were particularly useful when working with other white people struggling with their racist conditioning. By remembering that each person is fundamentally enlightened, white allies seemed to have more energy to continue doing unlearning racism work with other whites.

White participants added that remembering each individual's basic goodness can also help dissolve barriers that white allies tended to create between themselves as "good white people" and other whites as "bad racist people." Dissolving these kinds of divisions is particularly important so that white allies can continue reaching out to other whites without punishing or shaming them, and so that white allies can continue their own self-reflection in the lifelong process of unlearning racism. As Janet Carter highlighted, "We are all in this together. Interconnected."

Although Buddhist teachings on compassion and basic goodness were also emphasized by people of color both in the written literature and in my study, these specific applications by white participants have offered new insights into dealing with the challenges of white allies in struggling with their own racism and that of other white people. Especially because a main focus of anti-racism work for white allies involves

skillfully working with other white people, who may not have begun unlearning racism, these new applications of Buddhist teachings are particularly important.

Ego, Habitual Patterns, and Undoing Conditioning

The findings of my study regarding Buddhist teachings on ego, habitual patterns, and undoing conditioning add to the existing literature by offering a framework for understanding the workings of racism and privilege for white people and the path for unlearning racism. Buddhist teachings use the term, ego, to describe the personal mechanism which seeks to maintain safety and eliminate discomfort through retreating into habitual patterns of behaving. One white participant offered the insight that habitual patterns for white people are profoundly influenced by white supremacy and white privilege and create conditions to cause pain to other people.

This participant added that when white individuals begin unlearning racism, they may be tempted to retreat into habitual patterns of racism and privilege in the face of intense anxiety, confusion, and discomfort that may arise. Ironically, the mechanism of ego may also seek to enlist anti-racism work in the service of maintaining white privilege, furthering political careers, or gaining social status over other white people.

Many white participants in my study highlighted the magnitude of the racial conditioning that individuals experience in the United States. Respondents emphasized that tools such as meditation could be useful in undoing this conditioning by increasing self-awareness and offering support for leaning into discomfort. In this way, individuals can notice habitual patterns, interrupt them and make more conscious and loving choices.

Buddhist Practices

In my findings, white participants offered new applications of Buddhist practices such as meditation to the work of unlearning racism. Numerous white allies reported that when applied to anti-racism work, the practice of meditation offered a powerful tool for seeing the workings of racism both personally and socially. This finding is particularly important because racism and privilege are often quite invisible to white people, and awareness of racism is a crucial first step in beginning the process of unlearning racism.

White respondents articulated numerous benefits of applying meditation to unlearning racism work including gaining greater awareness into one's own reactions, emotions, and biases; finding greater choice in responding to racist conditioning; and even becoming better able to work with white defensiveness and white guilt.

Additionally, white allies reported that loving-kindness practices such as tonglen, the practice of breathing in the suffering of others and breathing out relief from suffering, were very useful in cultivating compassion for oneself, dissolving barriers, and relating from a less defended position. White respondents also reported that they found loving-kindness practices particularly useful when applied to increasing compassion for other white people who were oppressing others. Loving-kindness practices seem to provide the practical method whereby the Buddhist teachings on compassion can be worked with directly and experientially.

Recommendations for Social Workers from the Dominant Culture

As white social workers seek to increase their cultural competency, my findings lend themselves to several recommendations. Firstly, meditation, when practiced with the intention of unlearning racism, may prove useful for white individuals in slowing down,

becoming more embodied, and gaining awareness into their own racism, as well as the workings of racism in society. This awareness can shed light into their own habitual patterns of white supremacy and privilege and allow individuals more culturally sensitive choices in clinical work.

Secondly, individuals may find it helpful to cultivate gentleness with themselves as they move through the lifelong journey of unlearning racism. By cultivating compassion towards themselves when they make racist mistakes, white individuals may be able to let go of the need to be “perfect” and instead create an anti-racism way of being, which holds greater self-reflection, personal responsibility, curiosity, and endurance in meeting the day-to-day challenges of healing the effects of racism.

Thirdly, white social workers may find that cultivating compassion towards other white people can build stronger bridges with white colleagues and clients whom they see struggling with their racism. This recommendation is particularly important as white social workers committed to anti-racism work seek to have positive, meaningful influence through their daily conversations, work experiences, and clinical encounters.

As individuals seek to cultivate compassion towards themselves and others, they may find it useful to draw on various personal spiritual resources, philosophical theories, or psychological frameworks. For those individuals interested in Buddhist tools in particular, they may wish to seek out teachers or literature exploring tonglen and other loving-kindness practices. It is possible that people of many faiths, as well as non-religious people, may find these practices useful in cultivating compassion through mental, emotional and physical means.

Finally, social workers from the dominant culture may benefit from keeping in mind how easy it is for anti-racism work to become a way to build up one's own ego and actually maintain white privilege or gain social status over other white people. By checking in with their own motivation and cultivating compassion for themselves and others, it is possible for individuals to engage in a deeper process of unlearning racism and to build connections between themselves and other white people, as well as people of color.

These recommendations are offered in service of social workers' goal of effective cross-cultural therapeutic work. Through practicing meditation, cultivating compassion for themselves and others, and monitoring their own motivations, social workers from the dominant culture can engage in a self-reflective process that brings deeper levels of awareness to previously unconscious racial bias and conditioning. By consciously taking steps such as these to unlearn racism, social workers can work to minimize their expression of unintentional racism through microaggressions and they can further their goal of competent cross-cultural practice.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

In conducting the research, I was aware that my experiences as a white Buddhist practitioner interested in anti-racism work had the potential for introducing bias into the study, and I sought to minimize this bias as much as possible. When creating the instrument for data collection, I tried to frame the questions in a way that did not assume that participants had found Buddhism to be applicable to their anti-racism work, and indeed, several participants highlighted how Buddhism had not been useful for them in aspects of anti-racism work.

As for the sample of my study, it is difficult to know how representative my participants were of the larger group of individuals across the country interested in Buddhism and anti-racism work. Because of limited existing research, it is difficult to guess the size and demographics of this population. My sample size was 21, two of whom were people of color and 19 of whom were white.

When assessing the relevance of my findings, it is important to note the limitations of who were included in the sample. Because the survey was offered only in English, individuals who did not read and write English comfortably were excluded. Also, because I did a great deal of my recruitment via e-mail, individuals without internet access or skills may have been overlooked. In this way, the study was most accessible to English-speakers with some access to technology.

I would also like to note that the way in which I framed the inclusion criteria and even the questions in the survey, tended to be geared towards white people, rather than people of color. By using terms such as “anti-racism” and “unlearning racism,” the focus of the work was located more in the process of white people working with their own racism, rather than with people of color dealing with their lived experiences of racism. In addition, the limited number of Buddhist practitioners of color in Western communities contributed to the difficulty in creating a more racially diverse sample.

In order to gather data from a more racially diverse sample, future research will need to seek out Buddhist practitioners of color more specifically. Selection criteria would probably need to change to more explicitly state the desire to interview Buddhist practitioners of color, as well as white Buddhist practitioners interested in unlearning racism and anti-racism work. Collaboration with Buddhist practitioners of color might

assist future researchers in tapping whatever networks of Western Buddhists of color exist in the United States.

The impact of racism on individuals is quite different depending on their targeted or privileged status in the system of oppression. Trying to cover all variations within a brief survey proved difficult. Further research exploring the insights of a more racially diverse sample may need to offer different variations of the survey for participants of different racial backgrounds. Additionally, it could be useful in future research to study Buddhist practitioners at various stages of racial identity development and to determine if certain Buddhist practices or teachings are more ideally suited for individuals at different stages of identity development.

Because of my own social location and experiences, I began the research with a particular interest in gathering insights of white allies in applying Buddhism to anti-racism work. While I believe these insights add important contributions to the literature, I want to acknowledge that the methodology of the research may also have reenacted a subtle form of racism by providing greater access to white, English-speaking, educated people, while limiting access to people of color and those with less education and knowledge of technology. In doing more extensive research on this subject, future studies might best proceed through collaboration with Buddhist practitioners of color, who could offer much needed feedback about the methodology and structure of the research.

Throughout my research, I became increasingly aware of the limitations of language pertaining to race and racism, and I do not believe that I was ever able to resolve this issue satisfactorily. As one participant highlighted, the term, “anti-racism,” implies the very sense of conflict that Buddhism seeks to move away from. While I found

other terms to be better suited for this work, such as “racial unity,” “liberation,” or “diversity/inclusion,” these terms seemed less specific and less familiar to most people, and my favorite alternative, “healing the effects of racism,” often proved too cumbersome. In the end, I most often opted for the clarity and recognition of the term “anti-racism;” however, it is clear that further refinement of the language is necessary if we are to move away from conflict and towards healing.

While my research has suggested that Buddhist philosophy and practices are a potential resource in unlearning racism work, further research is needed to test the efficacy of meditation, cultivating compassion for oneself and others, loving-kindness practices, and monitoring one’s own motivations. Research will also be needed in order to better understand how to successfully implement Buddhist tools into anti-racism and diversity training with individuals of diverse racial identities, as well as how to make these tools accessible in secular settings with individuals of any faith or non-faith.

Of particular importance in future research could be the role of the body in both carrying past racial memories and experiences and offering resources for healing. Although the existing literature and findings in my research have indicated the potential of body-based practices for healing the effects of racism, it is significant that nearly half of the participants in my study appeared to have no knowledge of any such practices and many expressed an interest in learning them.

In addition to researching Buddhist practices and teachings, further study is needed to explore the wisdom that other spiritual traditions could apply to anti-racism work, as well as how to mobilize spiritual communities, in working towards healing the effects of racism. Although religion and spirituality are guiding influences for vast

numbers of people worldwide, much is yet to be understood about how spirituality and religion could be tapped as resources for healing the effects of racism.

Summary

The painful legacy of racism and racial violence in the United States presents one of the most urgent challenges that this country faces. While the past 50 years have seen tremendous progress in terms of greater civil rights and liberties for people of color, the more subtle nature of modern racism continues to operate, often unconsciously, throughout the dominant culture, creating devastating consequences for people of color and white people alike.

In order to facilitate personal and societal healing from the devastating effects of racism, it is critical that the task of anti-racism work not fall simply to people of color. Having gained so much from centuries of unearned race privilege, it is only right that white people shoulder their share of the burden in creating a more just, equitable, and compassionate society. Especially because this level of societal change hinges on unlearning racism at the personal level, the involvement and insights of white allies are critical.

The findings of my study suggest that practicing meditation, cultivating compassion for oneself and others, implementing loving-kindness practices, and monitoring one's own motivations could be critical elements in deepening the process of unlearning racism for white people. Although further research is needed, it is possible that spiritual teachings and practices may offer untapped resources in making the critical journey of racial healing in America.

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Appendix A

Human Subjects Review Application

Investigator Name: Chara Riegel

Project Title: Buddhist Philosophy and Practices as Applied to Unlearning Racism

Contact Address: XXX

Contact Phone: XXX

E-mail Address: XXX

Project Purpose and Design

The project is a fixed method, descriptive, qualitative study, exploring the application of Buddhist philosophy and practices to unlearning racism. Participants will be asked several questions related to these topics in an e-mail survey. Participants who prefer not to use e-mail will be sent a hard-copy of the survey through the mail along with a SASE. In researching the ways that Buddhism can inform anti-racism work, potential applications of the findings could improve efficacy of anti-racism and diversity training in many settings, including social work training program. In some small way, I hope that an outcome of the research could support cultural competency and social justice. The research will be used for a Masters of Social Work thesis and other presentations and publications.

The Characteristics of Participants

Participants will be individuals interested in anti-racism work, who profess a personal connection to Buddhist teachings and/or practices such as meditation. Participants will need to be able to read and write English comfortably and be over eighteen years old. These are the only inclusion criteria, and participants will not be excluded on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or ability. Desired sample size is twenty or more participants.

The Recruitment Process

The sample will be a snowball sample, and names of potential participants will be acquired through the recommendations of other participants. At the end of each survey, participants will be asked to give names and contact information for potential participants. In case they prefer not to give out contact information, they will also be encouraged to give my contact information to individuals whom they feel might be interested in participating. I will also contact individuals whom I have met in the past who are interested in Buddhism and anti-racism work, and I will contact authors whom I have found in the course of my research who have published on these topics. When I identify a potential participant, I will try to contact him or her through e-mail and assess whether he or she meets the selection criteria and has an interest in participating in the study. If I can not get an e-mail address for a potential participant, I will call him or her

and make the introduction and assessment over the phone. Please see the sample phone introduction below. When selecting participants, I will be interested in creating a sample with a range of both racial and ethnic diversity and Buddhist traditions.

The Nature of Participation

After receiving a signed Informed Consent, I will send participants an e-mail with an attached survey of several questions related to applying Buddhist teachings and practices to unlearning racism. Participants will open the e-mail attachment, type their answers to the survey, and e-mail the attachment back to me. If a participant prefers not to answer an e-mail survey, I will mail him or her a hard-copy of the survey, which he or she can fill out by hand and return to me with an enclosed, self-addressed, stamped envelope. Some individuals participating in the survey may have been publishing on this topic and they may wish to have their names associated with their responses. For this reason, at the beginning of the survey, I will offer the option of waiving confidentiality. Participants are in no way required to waive confidentiality. Participants who do not wish for their names to be used may indicate this on the survey, and their responses will be held in strict confidentiality. I will collect demographic data, with regards to gender, race/ethnicity, Buddhist tradition with which the participant most identifies, length of time practicing Buddhism, names of any other religious or spiritual identities, and education or work relevant to Buddhism or anti-racism. Participating in the research could take anywhere from 10 minutes to an hour, depending on how much detail participants would like to give.

Risks of Participation

I anticipate minimal risks to participants, because the subject matter is not overly sensitive and the participants are not highly vulnerable. However, it is possible that participating in the study could be emotionally distressing, because it asks participants to think about racism and spiritual or religious beliefs, which may bring up strong feelings. Furthermore, there is the possibility of additional risk for participants who choose to waive confidentiality, which could have personal and professional implications for these individuals. In case professional support is needed, I will give all participants the address for the National Association of Social Workers' website, which offers a comprehensive directory of clinical social workers throughout the United States.

Benefits of Participation

Participants may benefit from having the opportunity to share personal experiences and insights. They may also benefit from knowing that they are contributing to researching more effective methods for unlearning racism and doing anti-racism work.

Informed Consent Procedures

I will mail each participant 2 copies of an informed consent form, detailing the parameters of the study and explaining confidentiality. Each participant will keep one copy of the form for his or her records and return one signed informed consent form in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. If I have not received a signed informed consent form two weeks after mailing it, I will send a reminder e-mail to the participant.

Please see the sample reminder e-mail below. Once I have received a participant's signed informed consent form, I will send him or her the survey.

Precautions Taken to Safeguard Confidentiality and Identifiable Information

At the beginning of the survey, participants will be given the option of waiving confidentiality. For those individuals who wish their participation to remain confidential, I will remove their names from their responses and use coding numbers. I will also keep Informed Consent forms separate from the responses of these participants. My research advisor will have access to the data only after identifying information has been removed from the responses given by individuals wishing their participation to remain confidential. In presenting and publishing my findings, I will disguise all potentially identifying information related to those individuals who wish their participation to remain confidential. As required by Federal guidelines, all data will be kept in a secure location for a period of three years, and then they will be destroyed. I do not expect to need this data beyond three years, but if I do, they will remain in that secure location and will be destroyed when they aren't needed anymore. Participants will be free to withdraw permission for their names to be used or to withdraw from the study at any time up until April 15th, 2008, by contacting me using my e-mail address and phone number which I will provide to them. If a participant decides to withdraw, all data describing him or her will be immediately destroyed. If a participant decides to withdraw permission for his or her name to be used, I will disguise all potentially identifying information and no one will know of the participant's involvement in the research except for me.

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Advisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

My name is Chara Riegel and I am a second-year graduate student in the Smith College School for Social Work. For my Masters of Social Work thesis, I am conducting research about the applicability of Buddhist philosophy and practices to unlearning racism and anti-racism work. The research will also be used for possible presentation and publication.

Your participation in the research will involve answering several questions in a survey that I will send to you via e-mail. If you prefer not to answer over e-mail, I will mail you a hard copy of the survey. Feel free to spend as little or as much time as you'd like to answer the questions in the survey. Typical responses range from a few words to a few paragraphs so you could spend as little as 10 minutes on this. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are interested in anti-racism work and profess a personal connection to Buddhist teachings and/or practices such as meditation. Participants must be over eighteen. They will not be excluded on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or ability.

I anticipate that the risks involved in participating in the research will be minimal; however, it is possible that participating in the study will be emotionally distressing because it asks you to think about racism and spiritual or religious beliefs, which may bring up strong feelings. Because some participants may have been publishing on this topic and may wish to have their names associated with their ideas, I am offering the option for participants to waive confidentiality. Please be aware that choosing to allow your name and identifying information to be used could carry some personal or professional risk. Participants are in no way required to waive confidentiality. If you wish your responses to remain confidential, you may mark on the survey not to use your name and I will not use it. I will disguise all potentially identifying information and no one will know of your involvement in the research except for me. If participating in the research causes some distress and you would like professional support, a database of licensed social workers may be accessed through the National Association of Social Workers' website at this address: <http://www.helpstartshere.org/common/Search/Default.asp>.

Although you will receive no financial benefit for your participation in this study, you may benefit from the opportunity to share your personal experiences and insights, as well as from knowing that you are contributing to researching more effective methods for unlearning racism and doing anti-racism work. As required by Federal guidelines, all data will be kept in a secure location for a period of three years, and then they will be destroyed. I do not expect to need this data beyond three years, but if I do, they will remain in that secure location and will be destroyed when they aren't needed anymore. Smith faculty and staff advisors will have access to the data only after identifying

information has been removed from responses given by individuals who wish their participation to remain confidential.

This study is completely voluntary and you are free to refuse to answer specific questions. You are also free to withdraw permission for your name to be used or to withdraw from the study at any time up until April 15th, 2008, by contacting me using the information given below. If you decide to withdraw, all data describing you will be immediately destroyed. If you decide to withdraw permission for your name to be used, I will disguise all potentially identifying information and no one will know of your involvement in the research except for me. If you have any questions about your rights or about any aspect of the study, please feel free to contact me or the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee at (413)585-7974.

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS, AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY. Thank you!

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER

DATE

DATE

Please keep a copy of this informed consent form for your records. If you have any questions or wish to withdraw your consent, please contact:
Chara Riegel

Appendix C

Data Collection Instrument

Name: _____

Please mark one:

Ok to use my name: _____ or Don't use my name: _____

Date: _____

Gender: _____

Race/Ethnicity: _____

Buddhist tradition or lineage with which you most identify: _____

How long have you been studying or practicing Buddhism? _____

Please list any other religious or spiritual identities: _____

Any education or work relevant to Buddhism or anti-racism: _____

1. Please give a brief description of your current practice of Buddhism.
2. Please give a brief description of your interest or experience in doing anti-racism work with others.
3. If you find that Buddhist practices and teachings relate to anti-racism work, please provide specific examples of relevant teachings and practices.
4. Please give a brief description of your personal process of unlearning racism. (i.e. regarding privilege, whiteness, internalized oppression, internalized racism, etc.)

5. If you find that Buddhist practices and teachings relate to your personal journey of unlearning racism, please provide specific examples of relevant teachings and practices.

6. If you are familiar with some Buddhist or meditation, body-based practices that could be applied to unlearning the effects of racism in the body, please detail these practices.

7. What else would you like to add?

8. Do you know any other individuals interested in anti-racism work, who are also connected to Buddhist practices and teachings? Please, give their contact information below or feel free to ask them to contact me.

Name of potential participant:

E-mail Address or Phone Number:

THANK YOU!

Appendix D

Sample E-mail Introduction

***Note: The first portion will change slightly to reflect how I have met the potential participant or heard of him or her. Any other changes to the body of the e-mail will be minor and will keep all major points outlined below.

Dear _____,

Greetings. How are you? My name is Chara Riegel and I'm a friend of _____, who gave me your contact information. I wanted to get in touch with you because she told me of your interest in Buddhism and anti-racism work. I'm a graduate student in the Smith School for Social Work and I'm conducting research on applying Buddhist philosophy and practices to anti-racism work and unlearning racism. For the study, I'm e-mailing participants a survey with a few questions about these subjects, which could take as little as 10 minutes to fill out. Participants will be given the option of keeping their responses confidential.

If you are interested in sharing your thoughts on applying Buddhism to anti-racism work, please e-mail me. I'm happy to offer more information or answer any questions you may have. I will also need your mailing address so that I can send you an informed consent form detailing the parameters of the research and your participation. I'll send you two copies: one for you to keep and another for you to sign and return to me.

Thank you very much for your time and your willingness to share your ideas about these topics. And please don't hesitate to contact me.

With gratitude,

Chara Riegel

Appendix E

Sample Phone Introduction

Purposes of an introductory phone call will be similar to the above sample e-mail introduction. The phone contact will include the following intentions:

- To introduce myself as a graduate student in the Smith School for Social Work and explain that I'm currently conducting research addressing the applicability of Buddhist philosophy and practices to anti-racism work and unlearning racism.
- To confirm that the individual has a personal connection to Buddhism and anti-racism work.
- To explain that if the individual agrees to participate in the research, I will e-mail him or her a survey with a few questions about these topics and that typical responses range from a few words to a few paragraphs and it could take as little as ten minutes to complete the survey.
- To explain confidentiality and that I will also mail him or her a hard copy of a letter of informed consent that he or she will need to return to me before participating in the research.

Appendix F

Reminder E-Mail

Dear _____,

Greetings. By now you should have received two informed consent forms in the mail from me. Please keep one form for your records, and if you haven't already signed and returned the other form in the self-addressed stamped envelope, please do so. As soon as I receive this signed form, I'll be able to send you the questionnaire via e-mail, or as a hard copy, if you prefer.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns. Thank you so much for your time and thoughtfulness about this topic.

Sincerely,

Chara Riegel

Appendix G

Referral Sources

National Association of Social Workers' website address:
<http://www.helpstartshere.org/common/Search/Default.asp>

Appendix H

Human Subjects Review Approval Letter

January 13, 2008

Chara Riegel

Dear Chara,

Your revised materials have been reviewed and all is now in order. You did a good job of describing your hopes about the use of the material without sliding over into another role in your presentation. We are happy to give final approval to your study and hope you are successful in your recruitment efforts.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain signed consent documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your project.

Sincerely,

Ann Hartman, D.S.W.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Mary Beth Averill, Research Advisor