



MONASH University

Disindividualisation: Theorising the Religious Identity Negotiations of Young Australian Buddhist Practitioners

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Abstract

This thesis develops a new theoretical and conceptual framework for Buddhist youth identity negotiation. In particular, it identifies the modes of selfhood and relationality young Australian Buddhist practitioners adopt in a contemporary era where Buddhism has developed globalised and detraditionalised forms, and where perceptions about Buddhism have become increasingly multiple and ambiguous. It adopts a 'lived' approach to researching religion, which looks at the ways religion is experienced both within and beyond religious institutions, as shaped by the unique biographies of individuals. It uses a 'narrative' method which enables participants to construct meaningful stories about their religious identity negotiations, and provides the researcher with an insight into participants' modes of selfhood and relationality. It does this by interviewing 22 young Buddhist practitioners from a range of ethnic backgrounds who have been actively engaged in Buddhism for at least five years.

This thesis moves beyond a standard 'ethno-religious' approach to studying Buddhist youth religiosity, which focuses on the role of families and religious institutions in passing down religious and ethnic traditions from one generation to the next within Asian Buddhist communities. It also considers two other approaches used to study youth religiosity, yet finds that none of these approaches completely explains contemporary Buddhist youth identity negotiation. I refer to these two additional approaches as an 'individualised' approach, which emphasises the role of individual choice in religious identity negotiation amongst young people, and a 'minoritised' approach which emphasises the development of defensive religious identities in response to marginalisation within prevailing host cultures. While elements of each of these three approaches are reflected in the religious identity negotiations of participants in my study, I contend that in the case of young Buddhist practitioners, it is also necessary to consider emerging literatures which focus on the contextualisation, depoliticisation, fluidity and interconnectedness of identity, and to develop a theory for conceptualising Buddhist youth identity which reflects Buddhist teachings about the self.

This thesis finds that young Australian Buddhist practitioners take responsibility for negotiating religious identity in ways which reflect Buddhist teachings about the self, which include impermanence, emptiness, interdependence and non-self. It shows how participants display a predilection towards becoming, or remaining religiously indistinct, rather than distinct in conditions of cultural and religious diversity. It contends that participants' purposeful efforts to harness Buddhist teachings about the self in their religious identity negotiations reflect Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2002), and Zygmunt Bauman's (2001) theories of individualisation, as well as Bauman (2004) and Anthony Giddens (1991) work on identity more broadly. It further contends that young Australian Buddhist practitioners' efforts to become or remain religiously indistinct align with Maffesoli's (1996) concept of 'disindividuation'. In this regard, I consider the religious identity negotiations of young Australian Buddhist practitioners to reflect a selective amalgamation of both individualisation and disindividuation. I refer to this amalgamation as 'religious disindividualisation', which I describe as a process of purposefully working on oneself to become, or remain indistinct, in order to enhance social cohesion and interconnectedness with others in conditions of cultural diversity.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.



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Chapter 1: Introduction

In this Introduction, I present the aims, rationale and approach of the thesis, and summarise the core argument as well as the key findings. I firstly discuss recent developments in the contemporary Western Buddhist landscape and young people's engagement with it. I explain why young Buddhist practitioners are an ideal cohort for investigating recent developments in Buddhism, and why a focus on religious identity negotiation is required. I then discuss how Australia provides a unique context within which to investigate processes of Buddhist youth identity negotiation, and explain the research approach and method used. The main findings of the study are outlined, followed by a brief outline of the theoretical framework developed throughout this thesis. I explain the rationale behind the research foci pursued, and the contribution this thesis makes to the literatures on Buddhism in the West and youth religiosity. I conclude with a summary of the main points covered in each chapter.

Buddhist youth identity in a new religious landscape

Over the past few decades, Buddhist ideas, practices and resources have spread rapidly throughout Western countries. Alongside the migration of Buddhists from majority Asian Buddhist countries, the efforts of key Buddhist figures such as His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh to spread Buddhist teachings to a global audience have helped fashion Buddhism as a benign and peaceful religion associated with values such as compassion, harmony and wisdom. Television shows such as *The Simpsons* (Moore, 2001), and celebrity endorsements (for example, from Keanu Reeves, Richard Gere and Leonard Cohen) have also helped portray Buddhism as an exotic and trendy religion (Rocha & Barker, 2011: 1), while mindfulness meditation (or simply 'mindfulness') has been widely appropriated as a mainstream practice to relieve stress and improve productivity (Farb, 2014). The Internet has helped facilitate the global spread of Buddhist ideas to vast audiences (Gleig, 2014), while words such as 'karma', 'zen' and 'reincarnation' have now become common parlance. And as Asia develops into a global superpower, travel and commerce to and from the Asia region continues unabated, bringing a greater number of people into

contact with Buddhist tourist sites and Asian Buddhist cultures (Schedneck, 2014). Buddhism has not only spread beyond its Asian origins; it has also breached its institutional confines, becoming accessible to ever diverse audiences (McMahan, 2012).

Young people in particular are perhaps most likely to engage with such globalised and detraditionalised forms of religion, due to the way they have been positioned as less constrained by religious institutions and authorities and more self-directed in their negotiation of religion (Collins-Mayo & Dandelion, 2010; Mason, Singleton, & Webber, 2007: 234-5; Smith & Denton, 2005; Yip & Page, 2013: 137-8; Yip & Page, 2017: 151). Young adults have been described by Peter Beyer (2013: 11) as 'individually responsible for and capable of building their own, personal relation to religion'. Rubina Ramji and Beyer's (2013: 11) study of young Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists found that 'it was up to the individual to discover...[religious] meaning from whatever sources each found authoritative or trustworthy, whether that be family, religious leaders, books, friends, the Internet, school, or other media'. Yet despite a growing literature on narratives of choice and self responsibility amongst religious youth, and the manifestation of globalised (Baumann & Prebish, 2002: 5-7; Harding, Hori & Soucy, 2014: 15-6; Quli, 2009: 19; Rocha, 2012) and detraditionalised (Borup, 2016; Irizarry, 2015; McMahan, 2008: Chapters 7 & 8) forms of Buddhism, approaches to theorising Buddhist youth identity which acknowledge these characteristics remain underdeveloped.

A focus on young people is required, as this is the generation which will profoundly influence the direction of Buddhism in Australia, and indeed, internationally, in the decades to come. It is this group which has been given little attention so far in the literature on Buddhism in Australia, yet whose voices perhaps best capture the dynamics and complexities of grappling with multiple Buddhist socialising influences, sources of religious authority and perceptions about Buddhism. Sumi Loundon's (2001; 2005) anthologies of Buddhist youth narratives, which include personal accounts written by young people from Australia, Canada, England, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Peru, Singapore, Thailand, the United States and other countries, delve into

many of the complexities of religious identity negotiation. As Loundon (2005: xiv) herself acknowledges, 'identity issues around personality, profession, and lifestyle typify the young adult years', issues which are compounded by the challenges of 'stepping into a spiritual world that, while not exactly counterculture, is not mainstream either'. This thesis offers a new approach to researching and theorising religious identity negotiation amongst young Buddhist practitioners which explicates how they grapple with the process of negotiating Buddhist identity vis-à-vis multiple contemporary Buddhist socialising influences, both within and beyond traditional Buddhist institutions. It develops a theory which identifies the modes of selfhood and relationality young Australian Buddhist practitioners use to negotiate Buddhist identity in a contemporary religious landscape where Buddhist teachings, communities and resources have become increasingly diffuse, or spread across religious and non-religious locales on a global scale (McMahan, 2012: 1-4; Soucy, Hori & Harding, 2014: 12, 15).

As discussed in the next chapter, there are already compelling approaches to studying youth religiosity, which shed much light on the peculiarities and continuities of negotiating religiosity in contemporary Western societies. My thesis identifies three such approaches, although this list is of course not exhaustive, and is unlikely to capture the diversity of religious commitment and expression amongst young people from a range of diverse backgrounds. This thesis should not be interpreted as a wholesale rejection of these existing approaches to youth religiosity. Indeed, aspects of each of these approaches find their way into the experiences and stories of many of my participants, as the later data analysis chapters show. My aim in developing an additional approach to youth religiosity is an attempt to broaden understandings of youth religiosity in a way which develops upon emerging themes, questions and possibilities raised not only by scholars of religion, but also those whose work falls more broadly within studies of 'identity', and whose work has re-conceptualised, pulled apart, critiqued, re-fashioned and even abandoned the notion of identity. It is in this regard that existing approaches often do not go far enough to capture the more fluid, ephemeral and interrelated complexities of youth religious identity

negotiation, which I hope can be drawn out more fully with the development of a new approach.

The Australian context

Australia provides a fascinating context within which to explore Buddhist youth identity negotiation. Like other Western countries such as the United States, Canada and France, Australia accepted large numbers of refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in the aftermath of the Vietnam War through its refugee program, which saw up to 22,000 refugees settled in Australia per year from the early 1980s (Refugee Council of Australia, 2012). The influx of these refugees significantly bolstered the number of people identifying as Buddhist in these countries, with Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data recording the percentage of Buddhists in Australia for the first time in 1981, at 0.2% or 35,073 people (ABS, 1981: 12). (Prior to this, the only other non-Christian religious affiliations listed in the Australian Census were 'Hebrew', 'Muslim' and 'Other non-Christian including Pagan' (ABS, 1976: 3).) However as Australian sociologist of religion, Gary Bouma (2003: 59) observes, 'the recent increase among Buddhists cannot be entirely explained by migration'. In 2011, the percentage of Australians identifying as Buddhist grew to 2.5% or 528, 977 people, making Buddhism the second most popular world religion in Australia after the major Christian denominations (in Australia in 2011, these were the Catholic, Anglican, Uniting Church, Presbyterian and Reformed, and Eastern Orthodox denominations) (ABS, 2011a). Amongst young people aged 18-34 in 2011, 3% identified as Buddhist (ABS, 2013). By comparison, the percentage of individuals identifying as Buddhist remains notably lower in the United States, where Buddhists made up only 0.7% of the population in 2014 (PewResearchCentre, 2015), and Canada, where Buddhists made up 1.1% of the population in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2011). An Ipsos MORI (2011) poll conducted in 2011 (consulted in lieu of the absence of government religion statistics in France) also found that only 1% of the French population identified as Buddhist.

Yet, despite Buddhism being the second most popular religion in Australia after the major Christian denominations¹, research on Buddhism in Australia remains scant. As Halafoff, Fitzpatrick and Lam (2012: 20) suggest, the dearth of research on Buddhism in Australia, despite its popularity, needs to be addressed, especially as Buddhism is likely to have affected Australian culture and identity. Accordingly, research on Buddhism in Australia will 'enable communities and state actors to better understand the history and sociological significance of Buddhism in the Australian context'. Similarly, Michelle Barker (2017: 375-6) suggests that the significance of Buddhism in defining Australia and Oceania is likely to be greater than what is currently recognised in the literature, and that the growth of transnational flows of Buddhism in and out of Australia and Oceania, along with the increase in second, third and beyond generation Buddhists in these nations 'gives rise to many questions about the lived status of Buddhism', 'as opposed to nationally endorsed views on the integration and effects of Buddhist organizations'.

I argue that this is best done by investigating the ways Buddhism is 'lived' (Hall, 1997; Orsi, 2003; McGuire, 2008), or situated within the contexts of young Buddhist practitioners' lives. I do this by collecting and analysing the unique religious biographies of twenty-two young adult Buddhist practitioners living in Australia, told from their own perspectives. This study uses a narrative method of interviewing, which pays attention to individuals' temporal lived experiences and processes of change regarding the self (Elliot, 2005: 6). A lived religion approach and narrative method are suitable for researching Buddhist youth identity negotiation in Australia, where Buddhism has become increasingly diffuse, and matters of identity have become salient particularly amongst young people.

¹ According to the most recent 2011 Australian Census data that is available. The major Christian denominations in 2011 were: the Catholic, Anglican, Uniting Church, Presbyterian and Reformed, and Eastern Orthodox denominations.

Main findings

This thesis finds that young Australian Buddhist practitioners develop religiously-inflected dispositions and strategies which fit within the circumstances of their unique, individual life biographies, to deal with the challenge of negotiating a range of social contexts where norms regarding religiosity are ambiguous, and must be figured out. It finds that young Buddhist practitioners take personal responsibility for negotiating religious identity in such a way that recognises the interdependent, impermanent and empty nature of the self across multiple social contexts. It proposes that young Buddhist practitioners draw upon Buddhist teachings about the self, namely, regarding self-responsibility, non-self, interdependence and impermanence to negotiate Buddhist identity in an Australian context where Buddhism has spread across an ever expanding number of locales. It argues that these Buddhist teachings about the self need to be taken into account in a theorisation of Buddhist youth identity.

This thesis shows that young Australian Buddhist practitioners negotiate religious identity in such a way that recognises their interdependence with others, and the futility of constructing a distinct or separate identity based on social categories such as religion, ethnicity and race. I show that young Australian Buddhist practitioners take active steps to become, or remain, religiously indistinct in order to minimise discrimination towards themselves, to minimise religious conflict, and to reduce suffering for themselves and others. I refer to this process as *disindividualisation*, and show that this approach can be seen in the religious identity negotiations of young Australian Buddhist practitioners in three key areas: socialisation, belonging, and participation (both civic and political).

Theoretical framework

To theorise my findings, I draw upon Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and Bauman's (2001) theories of 'individualisation', Bauman (2004) and Giddens' (1991) work on identity, as well as Michel Maffesoli's (1996) concept of 'disindividuation' and Elias's (1978; 1991; 1994) work on the self in relation to society. I suggest that disindividualisation can be conceived as a selective amalgamation of both

individualisation and disindividuation. I propose that a theory of disindividualisation helps us better understand Buddhist youth identity negotiation in a globalised and detraditionalised Buddhist era, and that it can be helpfully contrasted to existing approaches to youth religiosity, which I identify in this thesis as: i. an ethno-religious approach, ii. an individualised approach, and iii. a minoritised model of defensive religious identity.

These approaches, and the ways they will be critiqued and built upon, will be discussed more thoroughly in the literature review. For now, however, it is useful to clarify that the theory I develop in this thesis proceeds from the point that Buddhist youth identity is not static or given in any particular context. It can more appropriately be described as an ongoing process of negotiating the interconnections between young Australian Buddhist practitioners and other human actors in multiple and fluid social contexts, either religious, non-religious or otherwise. This outlook resonates with Sharon Smith, Sally Munt & Andrew Yip's (2016: 63) approach to studying LGBTI people engaged with Buddhist practices, which sought not to 'fix or essentialise identities – rather, to see these experiences as a way of understanding the processes by which participants came to adopt particular subject positions at different times'. As Smith et al. (2016: 63) acknowledge, the concepts of fluidity, ephemerality and contingency are key to understanding Buddhist approaches to identity.

As such, this thesis does not support the idea that Buddhist youth identity is something which is constructed, built upon and ultimately 'developed' or defended as a definable or describable 'thing'. Indeed, this is the reason why I refer to 'young Australian Buddhist practitioners' throughout the thesis, rather than 'young Australian Buddhists'. The use of this terminology is supported by Loundon's (2001: 195) finding, that 'young Buddhists tend to avoid saying 'I am Buddhist' as they believe that 'applying any label to themselves reifies a sense of self that conflicts with the Buddhist doctrine of 'no-self'. Loundon (2001: 195) also notes that 'the most common answer among young people in response to "What religion are you" is "I practice Buddhism" or "I am a Buddhist practitioner". Relatedly, I refer to processes of religious identity

‘negotiation’ rather than ‘construction’ to reflect the ongoing or unfixed nature of Buddhist identity as perceived by participants in my study.

Socialisation, belonging and participation

This thesis focuses on three key topics in relation to Buddhist youth identity negotiation: **socialisation**, **belonging**, and **civic and political participation**. These topics have been chosen due to their prevalence in the existing literature on religious youth identity, and their potential to shed light on processes of religious identity negotiation amongst young Buddhist practitioners. They have also been informed by my own experiences as a young Buddhist practitioner living in Australia (my position as a religious insider/outsider will be discussed in more detail in the Research Approach and Methods chapter). The significance of these themes was also borne out in my interviews with participants.

Regarding **socialisation**, this thesis observes that much of the extant literature on Buddhist youth focuses on the ethno-religious socialisation of second generation Buddhists from immigrant backgrounds. Such research looks at the role of families and religious institutions in socialising second generation Asian Buddhist youth into an ethno-religious identity, and the ways traditional cultural practices provide a thread of continuity from one generation to the next (Bankston, 1996; Vasi, 2011: 98; Zhou & Bankston, 1994). While more recent work in this area investigates the ways young Buddhist practitioners may differ from their parents in the way they engage with Buddhism (Baumann, 2002: 54; McLellan, 2008: 41; Thanissaro, 2013), little has been written about the various ways these young people *do* engage with Buddhism. This point is also made by Loundon (2005: xvii), who writes: ‘We have shelves of wonderful books on Buddhism, meditation, and philosophy, but we have little on the actual practices and beliefs of contemporary Buddhists’. Her work looks at the way young people have encountered Buddhism in various ways, such through family socialisation, meditation groups, overseas travel, world religion courses and activism. Loundon (2001: 189-219) also identifies potential themes for further consideration, which include: the reconciling of Buddhism with other faith traditions; intergenerational dialogue regarding religiosity; the differences and similarities between young people

who have been raised as Buddhists and those who have not; the role of Buddhism in navigating life choices; the influence of pop culture on young people's negotiation of Buddhism; the impact of globalisation, modernisation and Westernisation on young people's engagement with Buddhism, balancing tradition and renewal; and negotiating a Buddhist identity amidst broader misconceptions about Buddhism as 'a freewheeling morality or lifestyle, a reason for psychedelics, a severe discipline, or that it's New Age and cultish'. Crucially, Loundon's work also investigates the experiences of those who do not fit well within either the 'ethnic or 'convert' category – a group which has received little attention in studies of Buddhism in the West, yet is increasingly being recognised due to the maturation of second and third generation of ethnic Buddhist immigrants – who may identify more with Western culture than with the cultural tradition of their parents – as well as the children of Buddhist converts, who may not have discovered Buddhism for themselves. This thesis extends upon Loundon's fascinating work, engaging with many of the themes Loundon (2001) has identified by conducting a more recent investigation of the religious socialisation of young Australian Buddhist practitioners from a range of ethnic backgrounds who have either been raised as Buddhists, who have discovered Buddhism through other means, or who experiences do not fall easily into either of these two categories. It seeks to identify the resources young Australian Buddhist practitioners draw upon to navigate a more complex religious landscape, and the dispositions and complex subjectivities they develop throughout this process. It also develops a theoretical framework for conceptualising young Buddhist practitioners' perceptions about the overall process of negotiating multiple Buddhist socialising influences.

This thesis also focuses on **belonging** as an aspect of identity negotiation amongst young Australian Buddhist practitioners. Studies of religious youth have tended to focus on marginalisation, and these studies are useful in that they highlight power relationships which often exist due to structural factors, and which may lead to exclusion and stigmatisation amongst young religious practitioners. Indeed, studies of minority religious youth, such as Muslims, Hindus and Witches, reveal multiple, contrasting narratives of marginalisation from various sources and resistance to categorisation, with religion serving as a source of both identity anxiety (Noble &

Poynting, 2010: 496-500) and identity stabilisation (Ezzy, 2003, Mansouri & Wood, 2008: 66) for minoritised² religious youth. Young Buddhist practitioners have been given little, if any attention in this regard; as Anna Halafoff, Ruth Fitzpatrick and Kim Lam (2012: 19) observe, issues of social inclusion, especially amongst young Buddhist practitioners, are likely to be overlooked due to an emphasis on Muslims in Australia and other Western democracies. The reasons for this are well known, and relate specifically to the events of September 11, 2001, the London bombings in 2005, and the proliferation of interest in the lives of Muslim youth following these events. However as Loundon (2005: 192) observes, many Buddhist youth are 'searching for communities of like-minded people, young and older, for support and guidance. They do not always find it nor are they always made to feel welcome'. Loundon's work highlights the fact that issues of belonging are significant for young Buddhist practitioners, who often struggle to find and connect with communities of belonging.

This thesis addresses the imbalance of research on belonging amongst religious youth by focusing on young Australian Buddhist practitioners. It proposes that there are two additional compelling reasons to investigate issues of belonging amongst young Australian Buddhist practitioners. The first of these is the prevalence of both Christianity and 'no religion' amongst young Australians, which positions all other religious identifications as minorities. Despite the diversification of Australia's religious scene, according to the most recent census data that is available, the percentage of young adults in the 20 to 29 age category identifying with Christianity in Australia in 2011 was still 48% - higher than for any other religious category in the same age group, including those opting for 'no religion' (30%) (ABS, 2013). The percentage of young people identifying with no religion is also high, and has increased over the past few decades. According to the 2011 Australian Census, young adults aged 18 to 34 were more than twice as likely to have no religion than young people in the same age group in 1976 (29% in 2011, up from 11% in 1976) (ABS, 2013). In such a context, it is

² I use the term 'minoritised' in this thesis in the same way Harris (2013: 16) does in her study of everyday multiculturalism amongst young Australians – as a way to capture the exclusionary processes experienced by particular groups without prescribing an 'outsider' status.

important to consider the experiences of minority religious youth, including Buddhists, who, due to their relatively low numbers, are more likely to face experiences of marginalisation than those who are in the majority identifying as Christian, or having no religion.

The second reason for investigating belonging amongst young Australian Buddhist practitioners is Australia's ambivalent relationship with Asia, which has the capacity to exacerbate exclusion within and beyond the Australian Buddhist community. Cristina Rocha and Michelle Barker (2011: 1, 4) observe that while Buddhism has been portrayed as a 'trendy' and 'exotic' religion in Australia, as in other Western countries, Australia continues to harbour long-held suspicions towards Asia (Rocha & Barker, 2011: 5; Yonetani, 2004). As such, Australia oscillates between anti-Asian sentiment and a desire for closer engagement with the Asian region. As Buddhism is a religion with Asian origins, and over 50% of Buddhist adherents in Australia were born in an Asian country (ABS, 2011a³), it is important to investigate processes of belonging and exclusion amongst young Buddhist practitioners in Australia by focusing on the ways racial, ethnic and linguistic difference affect religious belonging, and how issues of exclusion are negotiated by young Australian Buddhist practitioners. Smith, Munt and Yip (2016: 6) raise a similar concern, suggesting that researchers would do well to:

consider the ways in which particular Buddhist practitioners might come to be minoritised within particular sanghas/Buddhist movements and how these practices of minoritisation may relate to practitioners' ethnicities. This might enable better tracking of processes of exclusion and inclusion in various sanghas.

They note that further theoretical development in the areas of 'race, ethnicity and diasporas' might assist in this task.

³ The Table Builder function on the Australian Bureau of Statistics website was used to identify the place of birth of those identifying as 'Buddhist' in the 2011 Australian Census. It is likely that many more will have an Asian background due to being the Australian-born children of Asian Buddhist immigrants.

In addition to socialisation and belonging, I contend that it is important to investigate young Buddhist practitioners' **civic and political participation**. There is a well developed literature on 'socially engaged', or simply, 'engaged' Buddhism, which looks at the ways Buddhist practitioners utilise or apply Buddhist teachings to alleviate social, environmental, political and economic suffering. While some of this work has focused on the experiences of young people in particular⁴, there is very little, if any research on the ways broader social and political developments over the past few decades have changed the nature of participation in contemporary Western democracies. As Anthony Giddens (1994: 91) observes, contemporary political engagement is increasingly based on a politics of identity and choice, transforming participation into an individualised, personalised and reflexive endeavour. Accordingly, young people today are likely to stay in formal education longer, stay at home longer, face precarious working conditions, and consequently, experience more barriers to achieving the markers of traditional adult status (Harris, 2006: 222; MacDonald, 2008). As a result, young people are increasingly required to construct their own biographies and identities, as these are no longer ascribed from birth. According to Anita Harris and Joshua Roose (2014: 795), these trends can be observed in an Australian context, where contemporary youth participation is increasingly defined by biographies of choice and a 'do-it-yourself' ethic which reflects the forces of globalisation and conditions of insecurity and risk. Furthermore, several scholars have observed how contemporary youth use religion or spirituality as an 'anchor' for developing a moral and ethical framework for living in detraditionalised times (Berger & Ezzy, 2007; Page & Yip, 2013). It is useful, then, to investigate how these biographies of choice might be reflected in the civic participation of young Australian Buddhist practitioners, and how Buddhist teachings might inform the development of ethical frameworks for living amongst young Australian Buddhist practitioners.

⁴ Loundon (2001: 131-188) provides 9 narratives of young Buddhist which focus on Buddhism and social transformation, while the youngest participant from Fitzpatrick's (2014) study of socially engaged Buddhism in Australia was 30 years old.

It is important to focus on Buddhist practitioners in particular, because as Ballard, Pavlova, Silbereisen & Damon (2015: 2) observe, extant knowledge about predictors of civic and political participation amongst religious youth comes mainly from majority populations within Western countries. This makes it difficult to apply broad findings about youth civic and political participation to minority ethnic and religious groups in Western societies. Nationally representative samples from studies of religion and civic and political participation in Western countries typically include low numbers of participants from 'immigrant' religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam, and as a result, often exclude meaningful discussions about these groups in the research findings (see for example, Smith & Denton, 2005; Jansen, 2011; PewResearchCentre, 2010). Findings from such studies, which link high levels of civic and political participation to the development of relevant skills and networks through church involvement (for example, Smith & Denton, 2005; Mason, Singleton & Webber, 2007; Lewis, MacGregor & Putnam, 2012; Mora, 2013: 1647) may not be applicable to minoritised religious groups, which have different organisational structures and fewer institutionalised links within host countries (Eckstein et al., 2015). As Youniss & Levine (2009) observe, different interpretations of social life and practices of civic participation are evident across religious, cultural and social groups. This has the potential to lead to different outcomes for civic participation practices, as how people see themselves ethnically, religiously and racially influences how they see themselves as citizens, what they consider their rights and obligations to be, and how they participate as citizens (Isin & Wood, 1999; Werbner & Yuval-Davis, 1999).

Regarding political participation in particular, it is useful to investigate the ways young Australian Buddhist practitioners perceive notions of national identity, and how they can or should contribute as Australian citizens. Perceptions of national belonging and inclusion are important, as understandings of citizenship increasingly centre around 'substantive' (Marshall, 1950) issues of social citizenship, in addition to formal citizenship rights. This is premised on the idea that 'full' citizenship is only achieved when individuals experience both formal and informal citizenship (Patton, 2014: 109). For marginalised youth, informal social citizenship is usually more difficult to achieve. In this regard, it is important to ascertain how young Australian Buddhist practitioners

perceive their national belonging in this regard, as this has implications for their capacity to be recognised and to participate fully as Australian citizens. It is also important to understand the nature of political participation from the perspective of young Australian Buddhist practitioners themselves, as a growing body of work is recognising the plurality of young people's everyday, non-traditional modes of political engagement, particularly amongst marginalised youth (Harris & Roose, 2014; Pruitt, 2016). As Jan Teorell (2006: 792) observes, a plurality of participatory forms makes 'the system more responsive to citizens' needs and preferences, and enhances political equality within liberal democracies. From this perspective, it is useful to investigate what kinds of political activities young Australian Buddhist practitioners engage in, in order for policy-makers to better respond to their needs, and to further enhance political equality.

About the study

The data from this study comprises semi-structured interviews conducted with twenty-two young Australian Buddhist practitioners. It should be noted that this is not a representative sample of young Buddhist practitioners in Australia. While an attempt has been made to include participants from a range of ethnic backgrounds, I wish to point out that this is a purposive sample which captures the voices of individuals who were highly committed Buddhist practitioners at the time of interviewing. 'Highly committed' in this study does not necessarily mean regular attendance at a Buddhist temple, nor does it necessarily mean identifying as a Buddhist, although both of these were true in most cases. It simply means that participants had been actively committed to Buddhism for at least five years at the time of interviewing. It is possible that if this study had involved nominal Buddhists, or in Thomas Tweed's (2002: 20) terms, 'Buddhist sympathisers', the findings would be different. The decision to interview highly committed Buddhists is an attempt to uncover the meaning of religion for young people in ways which go beyond superficial descriptions of religiosity amongst minorities as simply an aspect of ethnic upbringing, a defensive reaction to oppression within Western societies, or an individualised approach favouring individual autonomy. There are already numerous studies which

engage with these ideas; the purpose of this study is to provide a different picture of youth religiosity for an under-studied group.

Chapter summary

In Chapter 2, I review and critique literature on the religious identity negotiations of young people practicing Buddhism, as well as other religions, and identify themes I build on to develop a theoretical and conceptual framework for Buddhist youth identity negotiation. In particular, I analyse nationwide studies of young people and religion in Australia and the United States, as well as studies of minority religious youth in Australia and other Western countries. I note that while these studies usefully account for the continuing relevance of families and religious institutions, and explore issues of minoritisation which are applicable to young Buddhist practitioners, they do not sufficiently account for processes of religious identity negotiation amongst a diverse range of young Australian Buddhist practitioners. I discuss how recent work on youth religiosity emphasises the use of religion as an ‘anchor’ amongst young people, drawing attention to the need to explicate the religious teachings which serve as a framework for ethical development amongst young people in detraditionalised times.

In Chapter 3, I suggest that Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and Bauman’s (2001) theories of ‘individualisation’, as well as Bauman (2004) and Giddens’ (1991) work on identity provide a useful backdrop to theorise modes of selfhood amongst religious youth in detraditionalised times. I propose that for young Australian Buddhist practitioners, theories of individualisation should be considered alongside postmodern ideas about identity and ethnographic research on religion, which show how religious identity may be fluid, depoliticised and contextualised. I explain how these ideas are compatible with Buddhist teachings about the self, and discuss how they will be developed throughout the data analysis chapters. I describe Elias’s figurational ideas about the self in relation to society, as well as Maffesoli’s concept of ‘disindividuation’, and explain how these concepts help theorise Buddhist youth identity negotiation in a way which reflects Buddhist teachings about the self.

Chapter 4 is a description of the research approach and methods used in this study. I discuss how I utilise a 'lived religion' approach, as well as Nancy Ammerman's (2003) work on religious identity as a study of the process of narrativity. I discuss how research questions were developed, how participants were recruited, ethics in relation to the study, the conduct of interviews, insider/outsider status, limitations of the study, and how the data were analysed.

Chapter 5 is the first data analysis chapter. It discusses the **religious socialisation** experiences of young Australian Buddhist practitioners, noting the ways religious identity is negotiated within and beyond families and religious institutions. This chapter provides a framework for understanding the complexity of Buddhist youth identity negotiation, noting not only the multitude of contexts for grappling with ideas about religion and the self, but also the multidirectionality of flows between young Australian Buddhist practitioners and parents, friends, religious figures and other religious socialising influences. It establishes Buddhist youth identity negotiation as an interconnected process of mutual exchange, rather than a one-way transmission of religious identity to young Australian Buddhist practitioners. It also takes note of the ways young Australian Buddhist practitioners are responsible for navigating these diverse contexts, and negotiating their religious identities overall.

Chapter 6 analyses the ways young Australian Buddhist practitioners take personal responsibility for negotiating their **religious belonging**, extending upon the idea of individual responsibility developed in the previous chapter. It discusses the influences on Buddhist negotiations of belonging, including multiculturalism, Anglo-Celtic privilege, national norms regarding religion, and perceptions about Buddhism and religion in Australia. It discusses the way belonging must be tentatively negotiated by young Australian Buddhist practitioners due to these multiple, ambiguous messages regarding Buddhism and religion in Australia. It also describes the way young Australian Buddhist practitioners negotiate these complexities, emphasising their own role in perpetuating ideas about the visibility and the practice of religion in society.

Chapter 7 looks at the **civic and political participation** experiences of young Australian Buddhist practitioners. It describes civic and political practices amongst young Australian Buddhist practitioners, as well as attitudes underpinning these practices, and reasons for participating or not participating in certain ways. This chapter describes more explicitly the ways Buddhist doctrines of *anattā* (non-self), *śūnyatā* (emptiness), *pratītyasamutpāda* (dependent origination), and *anicca* (impermanence) inform participation and the interaction between the individual and society. It further develops ideas about work on the self, interconnectedness, the desire to enhance social cohesion, and connects this to Elias's work on the relationship between individuals and society, as well as Maffesoli's concepts of neo-tribal sociality and disindividuation.

Chapter 8 concludes by summarising the main findings of my study, and explains how the findings challenge, yet also build upon existing approaches to youth religious identity. It observes that while families and religious institutions still play an important role in religious socialisation, even for those not brought up as Buddhists within ethnically homogenous communities, young Buddhist practitioners should be perceived as individuals who are capable of grappling with multiple religious socialising influences. It observes that while processes of minoritisation can be observed in the belonging experiences of young Buddhist practitioners, young Buddhist practitioners do not develop defensive religious identities. It also observes that while young Buddhist practitioners' civic and political participation shows evidence of work on the self, this focus on the self does not reflect a lack of concern for others; indeed, it is perceived as a way to help others by means of self-improvement. This chapter provides a summary of the ways Buddhist teachings about the self influence socialisation, belonging and participation amongst young Australian Buddhist practitioners, and further builds upon this analysis by explaining the applicability of individualisation and disindividuation to develop a theory of disindividualisation. Lastly, it identifies some potential theoretical and practical implications of adopting a religious disindividualisation framework for understanding Buddhist youth identity. It also identifies the limitations of the study, and suggests areas for future research.

Chapter 2: Buddhism and Youth Religiosity

This chapter firstly reviews and critiques existing research on Buddhism in Australia, and describes the current Australian context in order to establish some parameters for conducting research on young Buddhist practitioners in Australia. It then moves onto a discussion and critique of three dominant approaches to youth religiosity which were mentioned in the Introduction: an ‘ethno-religious socialisation’ approach, an ‘individualised’ approach, and a ‘minoritised’ model of defensive religious identity. It critiques these existing approaches by drawing upon the literature on studies of Buddhism in the West which critique the ‘ethnic’/ ‘convert’ model of Buddhism; scholarship which challenges the liberal agency of individuals, particularly that of minorities; scholarship on multidirectional religious flows between generations; literature on the depoliticisation of religious identity and its variability across different social contexts; postmodern writings about identity; and recent work which investigates the use of religion as an ‘anchor’ or a positive framework for living in detraditionalised times. More specifically, it establishes the need to develop a middle ground between a highly structured ‘ethno-religious socialisation’ approach, and a strongly agentic ‘individualised’ approach, which additionally recognises the ways religious teachings may be harnessed to facilitate pro-social modes of selfhood and relationality for living in detraditionalised times. It argues that it is necessary to consider additional literatures due to Buddhist teachings about the self, the development of globalised and detraditionalised forms of Buddhism, and the complexity of subject positionings which emerge as a result.

While I spend a considerable portion of this chapter discussing and critiquing an ethno-religious socialisation paradigm, this is not intended as a reflection of the greater significance or weight of this approach in comparison to the two other approaches I discuss. Rather, this is simply due to the longevity of this approach, particularly to explain the religiosity of young people whose parents are first generation immigrants in Western countries, and the accumulation of a significant body of work which can be drawn upon to critique this approach. My aim here is to

consider the applicability of these critiques in an Australian context for the specific purpose of developing a theoretical and conceptual framework for the study of Buddhist youth identity.

Research on Buddhism in Australia

Unlike the long history of Buddhism in Australia⁵, scholarship on Buddhism in Australia is still in its early stages of development. Paul Croucher's (1989) *History of Buddhism in Australia* is one of the earliest, and most well-recognised publications which details the growth and significance of Buddhism in Australia from 1848-1988. While Croucher (1989) offers a colourful and well-researched account noting the key figures and controversies which have shaped Buddhism in Australia, as Halafoff et al. (2012: 17) note, there are a number of key issues which warrant further investigation. This is due to the passage of over twenty years since Croucher's publication, vast changes to the ethnic composition of the Australian Buddhist population, the development of new theoretical and conceptual frameworks for studying Buddhism in the West, and the identification of additional characteristics pertaining to the development of Buddhism in Western societies. Regarding the last of these, Rocha & Barker: 2011: 10) have identified the following characteristics of scholarship on Buddhism in the West:

...the plurality of Buddhist traditions in a single country, a diversity of practice for those who converted and those who were born into the religion, blurring of monasticism and lay practice with the consequent diminished role of Buddhist monastics, equality for women, application of democratic principles, emphasis on ethics, secularization (this includes the emphasis on the rational nature of Buddhism and its congruence with Western sciences).

Rocha & Barker (2011: 11) (citing Spuler, 2000: 38-40; Spuler, 2003b) argue that several of these characteristics are present in Australia as well, including: the diversity of Buddhism in Australia, a differentiation between so-called 'ethnic' and 'convert'

⁵ The first recorded contact of Buddhists in Australia was marked by the arrival of Chinese labourers in 1848 (Croucher, 1989: 2).

Buddhism, an emphasis on lay Buddhism, an application of democratic principles, and some emphasis on social engagement and secularisation. It can be argued that scholars of Buddhism in the West are also becoming increasingly aware of the ways White privilege manifests in the literature on Buddhism in the West (see for example, Harding, Hori & Soucy, 2014; Hickey, 2010; Smith et al., 2016; Quli, 2009) – Rocha & Barker (2011: 6) themselves note that Australia continues to harbour an image of itself as a White nation which objectifies the ethnic/migrant ‘Other’, at the same that it promotes itself as a multicultural country built on immigration. Additionally, Halafoff et al. (2012: 13) note that Australian scholars investigating Buddhism have also become increasingly engaged in debates regarding terminology, including that of modern/postmodern/multiple modern Buddhisms, and the ‘long-standing debate regarding convert and ethnic Buddhism’.

Yet as Rocha & Barker (2011: 13-15) also observe, scholarship on Buddhism in Australia has also identified characteristics which are unique to the country, including anti-authoritarianism, an engagement with Indigenous spirituality, and support for the ordination of *bhikkunis*⁶ in the Thai Theravada tradition⁷. Rocha and Barker (2011: 15) further identify multicultural policies, Australia’s geographical proximity to Asia and Australia’s ambivalent relationship with Asia as key characteristics which define the development of Buddhism in Australia. Consequently, they support an approach to research on Buddhism in Australia which draws usefully on theoretical frameworks developed by scholars of Buddhism in other Western countries, yet also recognises the specificities of the Australian context.

This is indeed the approach I adopt in this study. In the next section, I elaborate on the factors Rocha and Barker (2011) have identified which have shaped the development of Buddhism in Australia, and how they inform my research on Buddhist youth identity

⁶ Female Buddhist nuns

⁷ In 2009, Bodhinyana Monastery in Perth ordained four bhikkunis without authorisation from elders of the Wat Poh lineage in Thailand. This led to the expulsion of Bodhinyana Monastery and the excommunication of Phra Brahmavamso (also popularly known as Ajahn Brahm) from the Wat Poh lineage.

negotiation in Australia. I explain how this supports the use of a new multicultural citizenship framework developed by Harris (2013) to situate contemporary young Buddhist practitioners in the Australian context. I then critique existing approaches to youth religiosity using theoretical and conceptual frameworks developed by scholars of Buddhism in other Western countries.

The Australian context

As noted above, one of the key features defining Buddhism in Australia is Australia's geographic proximity to Asia, which has made the development of Buddhism in Australia 'different to the growth of Buddhism in other Western countries' (Rocha & Barker, 2011: 10). While the geographic proximity of Australia to Asia is likely to be responsible for the higher percentage of Buddhists in Australia than other Western countries, it also has the capacity to heighten inequalities relating to socially constructed categories of race and ethnicity for the Australian Buddhist community. Tensions relating to racial and ethnic differences, specifically involving 'Asian' versus 'Western' subjectivities, are exacerbated by the fact that the majority (over 50%) of individuals identifying as 'Buddhist' in 2011 were born in an Asian country (ABS, 2011b). Indeed, Rocha and Barker (2011: 6) point out that many chapters in their recent edited volume, *Buddhism in Australia: Traditions in Change* 'delve into Anglo Australians' social, political and cultural capital vis-à-vis Asian Australians' lack of these'. As they maintain, these inequalities should be understood within the context of Australia's historical 'ambivalence toward Asia', which can be observed in political manoeuvres that have at various periods distanced Australia from the Asia region, and have shown a desire for a closer engagement with Asia at other times. The politics of Asian inclusion or exclusion, and their effect on Buddhist youth identity negotiation, are worth exploring in more detail particularly amongst young adult Buddhist practitioners, who have grown up in a national context where anti-Asian sentiment (particularly during Senator Pauline Hanson's⁸ initial rise to prominence in the mid

⁸ Pauline Hanson is an Australian right-wing politician who has built her political trajectory on a populist and conservative platform. She initially gained prominence for comments made during her 1996 maiden speech to parliament, where she claimed that Australia was 'in danger of being swamped by Asians' (Pauline Hanson's One Nation Political Party, 2015).

1990s) has operated alongside an official multicultural policy, which supports the maintenance of diverse ethnic and religious identities.

Young Buddhist practitioners' negotiation of these contrasting social forces makes their religious identities more complex than that of religious youth who may face more widespread discrimination, such as Muslims. As Scanlon Foundation research reveals, Australians' attitudes towards Buddhists are more favourable than attitudes towards Muslims, with 25% of Australians holding either 'strong negative' or 'negative' views about Muslims, compared to only 5% for Buddhists across the same categories (Marcus, 2016: 54). An approach to understanding youth religious identity which emphasises victimisation and the development of defensive attitudes in response to widespread discrimination within Western host cultures (Mansouri, 2010; Northcote & Casimiro, 2010; Saniotis, 2004) has been widely used to conceptualise religious identity amongst minoritised religious youth, such as young Muslims and Hindus in Western societies (Duderija, 2010; Raj, 2010). Yet this model is likely to hold little explanatory value for understanding the religious identity negotiations of young Australian Buddhist practitioners, who occupy more complex subject positions involving both multicultural inclusion and anti-Asian exclusion. To quote Zetter et al. (2005: 14), 'cohesion' can coexist alongside 'separateness', due to young Buddhist practitioners' multiple affiliations and identifications (for example, experiencing White privilege but practicing a marginalised Asian religion).

A new citizenship framework

The growing complexity of cultural diversity has prompted scholars to develop new conceptual frameworks which recognise increasingly diverse, and often ambivalent subject positionings. Harris (2013), drawing upon both Steven Vertovec's (2007) concept of 'super-diversity' and Greg Noble's (2011) concept of 'hyper-diversity', asserts that in an Australian context, diversity is not only increasing, but is also subject to countless transmutations in everyday practice as people reflexively position themselves in relation to others in novel ways. She contends that these more complex, contextualised subject positionings held by young people are 'ushering in a new kind of multicultural citizenship' which reflects 'young people's expressions of

post-minority identities and their multiple, dynamic – and at times conflictual – modes of relationality’ (Harris, 2013: 4-5). In support of this assessment of diversity in Australia, Liza Hopkins (2011: 127-8) observes that young Muslims living in Australia actively resist singular and even hybrid and hyphenated identities (such as Australian-Muslim), and that they negotiate ‘more subtle, nuanced and meaningful identities’ based on ‘lived experience’. Noble (2009: 858) has also found that young Muslim men in Australia express contextualised religious identities, whereby they may opt out of expressing politicised Muslim identities in contexts such as workplaces where other identities may be more salient or appropriate. Noble calls for research which moves beyond a ‘reductive politics of identity’ and recognises the manifold aspects of subjective being.

Young Buddhist practitioners in Australia need to be understood within this new framework of multicultural citizenship, due to their movement between multiple social contexts involving Asian, Western, Buddhist and non-Buddhist elements in multicultural Australia, in which notions of belonging and exclusion based on single categories of ethnicity, race, religion or nationality may overlook the micro-dynamics of contextually-based subjectivities. In a globalised and detraditionalised Buddhist era, multiple boundary crossings are standard; young Buddhist practitioners continually traverse numerous social contexts on account of both their hybrid ethnic identifications (for example, Chinese-Australian Buddhist), as well as their movement within and beyond religious institutions. In each set of circumstances, young Buddhist practitioners are required to make themselves anew; they must adopt or develop appropriate identifications and modes of relationality befitting the circumstances. The dispositions they adopt or develop as they move from one context to the next are likely to be complex and multifaceted, and have yet to be explicated in studies of Buddhist youth. It is this approach to cultural diversity which shapes my research, and provides a background from which to critique existing approaches to youth religiosity. I begin my critique with a discussion of the ‘ethno-religious socialisation’ paradigm.

Ethno-religious socialisation

An 'ethno-religious socialisation' model is perhaps the most commonly used approach for researching youth religiosity. At its core, it emphasises the unidirectional 'transmission' of ethnic and religious traditions from first generation immigrants to second and third generation youth (McLellan, 2008: 38-43; Kuusisto, 2009: 780; Rocha & Barker, 2011: 13). According to this model, the parents of second and third generation minority religious youth face many obstacles in socialising and teaching their children about their religious traditions, including responses from the majority host culture (Vassenden & Andersson, 2010), language barriers (Amarasingam, 2008: 163-5), and the prevalence of secularism amongst youth (Bruce, 2011; McLellan, 2008: 39). In turn, ethnic and religious youth face the challenge of successfully negotiating both the receiving host culture and their own ethnic and religious heritage. According to this model, second generation immigrant youth are invested with an enormous amount of hope, worry and pressure to resist the lure of numerous socialising influences, such as other religions, atheism, language differences, peer pressure, cultural differences and materialism in a secular, multifaith and multicultural environment, by those keen to see minority religious take root in the West beyond the initial settlement of first generation immigrants (McLellan, 2008: 41). This precarious challenge has prompted a number of scholars to describe second generation ethnic and religious youth as the 'crucial cohort' for determining future patterns of ethnic and religious identity in Western societies (Kurien, 2005: 435; Mollenkopf, Kasinitz & Waters, 1995: 3).

In the case of Buddhism, for example, Janet McLellan (2008: 38-9) notes that Asian Buddhist families in Toronto seek to retain traditional ethnic and religious 'values, attitudes, ethos, and customary practices' for themselves and their children, even if this is merely a form of 'symbolic religiosity' (Gans, 1994: 585), whereby young people behave more as spectators than as participants of their parents' religious traditions. McLellan (2008: 39) observes how Sinhalese, Chinese, Vietnamese and Japanese Canadian temples in Toronto actively encourage youth participation by advertising their programs through ethnic magazines, television, radio and English-language websites. She notes how older youth are then brought into the administration of

traditional activities, solidifying ethnic community ties. In this context, parents and religious institutions such as temples, centres, youth groups, clubs and societies serve as key sites where second generation immigrant youth are socialised into an ethno-religious identity by wearing traditional clothes, eating traditional foods, celebrating ethnic events, learning ancestral languages, partaking in ethno-religious rituals, interacting with other members of the community, and contributing to processes of ethnic and religious identity preservation themselves as they become older (Amarasingam, 2008; McLellan, 2008: 38; Altman et al., 2010: 168-9 ; Raj, 2010: 540-1; Verkuyten, Thijs & Stevens, 2012: 1583).

An ethno-religious socialisation approach persists not only in studies of Buddhism but also in studies of other religions such as Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. Visser-Vogel, Westerink, de Kock, Barnard and Bakker (2012: 118), for example, maintain that 'identity develops in close relation to the adolescents' sociohistorical context'. In their study of highly religious Christian and Muslim Dutch adolescents, Visser-Vogel et al. (2012) stress the importance of investigating the role of parents, teachers, youth leaders and representatives from religious institutions in the development of religious identity. Studies of Jewish youth in the United States also investigate connections to other Jews, such as family, friends and other members of the Jewish community, and highlight the importance of these connections in reinforcing Jewish identity (Altman et al., 2010: 168).

More recently, a number of scholars have investigated the socialising role of 'secondary' religious institutions as young people move into the early years of adulthood. Lori Peek (2005: 223-227), for example, has investigated the religious socialising role of larger peer groups such as university-based Muslim clubs. She observes that these groups play a key role in constructing, reinforcing and affirming emergent religious identities amongst tertiary-aged Muslims in the United States. Prema Kurien (2005: 438, 441), too, has investigated the religious socialising influence of University-based religious clubs and religious institutions in her study of second generation Hindus in the United States. Kurien has found that such organisations allow

students to negotiate issues of collective identity, and can play a large role in the racial and ethnic identity construction of second generation immigrants.

Ethno-religious identity construction re-examined

It is not the intention of this study to refute the continuing influence of the family and religious institutions in reinforcing religious identity amongst young Buddhist practitioners living in Australia. Nancy Ammerman (2007: 5; 2014a: 6; 2014b: 190) makes this point clear in her work on 'everyday religion', which emphasises the importance of attending to the everyday negotiation of religion by non-experts, without neglecting the organised, institutional and 'official' promulgation of religion. Similarly, Tweed (2011: 25-6) has recently argued that scholars of Buddhism in the West need to recognise the role of institutional structures in channelling and regulating religious flows. Tweed uses an 'aquatic metaphor' of water moving through a dam to symbolise the movement of religion, stating:

In those sorts of hydrodynamic engineering systems, walled structures divert the water's direction and 'control valves' modulate its rate of flow. A large organization — a legal system or a corporation— usually constructs and maintains the dam, yet that collectivity also authorises a particular person, who is subject to transmitted codes intended to constrain individual choice, to turn the valve and control the flow. Similar processes are at work, I suggest, as social institutions, including nation states, divert and modulate religions' organic-cultural flows. It's important for scholars of Buddhism to notice this— and, so, to attend to the ways that power is enacted and not only the ways that meaning is made.

As Tweed maintains, religious institutions can indeed play a considerable role in shaping the religiosity of adherents, having the power to serve as 'valves' in a dam which may divert or even 'constrain individual choice'. This perspective is well heeded in my thesis; Tweed's comparison of religious institutions to valves in a dam usefully highlights the continuing authority of Buddhist institutions for contemporary Buddhist youth.

However I would also argue that the extent to which parents and Buddhist institutions shape youth Buddhist identity should be re-examined in light of significant social, cultural, political and economic changes over the past few decades which have de-territorialised religious authorities to an extent, and have introduced more 'valves' to channel the flow of Buddhism in a contemporary era. Scott Mitchell & Natalie Quli (2015: viii), for instance, have observed that 'Buddhist ideas and practices are increasingly appearing in...advertising and popular culture or in psychotherapeutic contexts such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction programs' since the turn of the century. David McMahan (2008: 256) has similarly observed that postmodern globalisation has disembedded Buddhism from 'traditional social networks and its participation in multiple discourses and cultural contexts'. As McMahan observes, Buddhism can now be found in an 'ever-increasing diversity of cultures, discourses, ideologies, print cultures, electronic media venues and communities, both local and international'. In Australia, examples of the globalisation of Buddhism include: the steady proliferation of Buddhist concepts and practices in Western psychology and mental health services in Australia (Metcalf, 2002: 348-364; Sherwood, 2003: 71-82; Kearney, 2011: 107-112; Barghazi, 2011: 124-133); an increase in Buddhist resources and dharma discussion on the Internet (Rocha & Barker, 2011: 9), visits by internationally-renowned Buddhist leaders such as His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, a strengthening of political, economic and cultural ties between Australia and Asia (Pietsch & Aarons, 2012: 33-46); cultural trends towards experiential religious approaches, including meditation (Bouma, 2006: 99), and favourable coverage about Buddhism in the Australian media (Cunningham, 2002; Diu, 2014; Karena, 2014). Young Australians' engagement with Buddhism is today thus much more complex than in the past, involving multiple religious socialising influences which may 'decentre', or in the very least, sit alongside the authority of religious institutions.

This increase in religious socialising influences not only channels Buddhist flows in different directions; it also requires more individual effort to navigate. Bouma (2006: 98-9) observes that contemporary forms of religiosity in Australia are 'less reliant on the formal organisations of churches, synagogues, temples or mosques', and are part

of larger cultural trends toward increased levels of personal agency and decision making. He notes that 'do-it-yourself' approaches to religion are facilitated by the widespread availability of spiritual paraphernalia in society, such as in bookshops selling crystals, candles, incense and books about inner growth, as well as films containing religious content.

In light of these changes, an ethno-religious socialisation approach is likely to be limited in its potential to canvass diverse manifestations of religiosity amongst contemporary young Buddhist practitioners in Australia. In this regard, I believe it is helpful to locate an ethno-religious socialisation framework as part of a multi-step process of research on Buddhism in the West in order to appreciate when and why it gained prominence in studies of Buddhist youth, yet also recognise its 'shelf-life', and the applicability of other, more recent approaches which have been pursued by scholars of Buddhism in the West. Tweed (2011: 18-19) provides a historical periodisation which usefully explicates phases of research on Buddhism in the United States. I outline it briefly here as I believe it provides a useful tool to analyse research on Buddhist youth in Australia and other Western countries where Asian immigration has significantly bolstered the number of Buddhist practitioners⁹.

Thomas Tweed: A periodisation of research on Buddhism in the West

Tweed (2011: 18) firstly observes that early sociological research on Buddhism in the United States conducted in the 1950s and 1960s focused on the 'Americanization' of Buddhism (Rust, 1951), with scholars observing international influences but interpreting them as 'episodic connections' to bounded national units. The next phase of research, Tweed (2011: 18) maintains, began in the 1970s, when sociologists began focusing on Buddhist institutions and their role in transmitting ethnic and racial traditions. Accordingly, research during this phase looked at the ways 'descendants of Asian migrants resisted or accepted acculturation'. Tweed notes that while this stream of research was largely influential, it assumed that 'culture' and 'religion' were a fixed

⁹ I focus on Tweed's description of sociological and social sciences research in particular as it is most applicable to my analysis of research on young Buddhist practitioners.

set of systems. From the late 1990s, Tweed (2011: 18) observes that scholars in the humanities and social sciences began to focus more on 'diasporic groups that had been displaced', with some specialising in 'Asian religions' in the West, or 'Western Buddhism', for instance. Tweed maintains that these studies began the task of decoupling 'place' and 'culture', and attending to the role of 'race, class, gender and nationalism' in shaping power relationships within Buddhist communities. He also notes that during this time, scholars drew attention to issues of colonialism, creolisation, identity and hybridity. According to Tweed (2011: 19), scholars during this time also began to recognise 'two-way cultural transformations' rather than simply focusing on ethnic minorities' 'acculturation' within the host society, or the unidirectional transmission of international religious influences. Tweed (2011: 19) lastly identifies the current phase of research on Buddhism in the U.S as beginning around 2000 with the initial publication of the *Journal of Global Buddhism*. Tweed argues that the journal title draws attention to the global focus of scholarship on Buddhism, and reflects the geographical expansion of the scope of research in the field. He observes how scholars during this period have acknowledged the importance of both global flows and the continuation of local variations, and have attempted to acknowledge issues of power without overlooking the role of individual agency (Tweed, 2011: 20).

It is within this periodisation that an 'ethno-religious socialisation' approach can be located as having gained prominence in research on Buddhism during the 1970s to the late 1990s. In Australia, for example, studies conducted by David Cox (1982), Enid Adam (1995) and Bouma (1996) have described the integral role religious institutions and families have played in supporting Australian Buddhist youth identity construction. Adam (1995: 173) found that Vietnamese Buddhist temples in Perth provided a supportive environment for parents to maintain and pass on their religious tradition to their children, and at the same time encouraged integration in Australian society by providing a buffer against racism and hostility in the general community. Similarly, Bouma (1996: 79-81, 84) found that for Vietnamese Buddhists living in Melbourne, Buddhist temples were integral in helping Vietnamese immigrants maintain deep links to their ethnic and religious heritage, with the establishment of an

ethno-religious community aiding processes of identity formation and belonging. These studies reflect the concerns of government and community groups of the time, which were to facilitate the settlement of newly-arrived migrants experiencing linguistic, cultural and other barriers on top of the trauma they experienced during the Vietnam War.

Decades have now passed since this initial settlement of refugees following the Vietnam War, and it would be expected that issues of 'race, class, gender and nationalism', 'two way cultural transformations', 'global connections and the persistence of local variations', and 'individual agency', as identified by Tweed (2011: 19-20) and Smith et al. (2016) would have all become more salient in research on Buddhism in Australia. However, a review of the recent literature on young Buddhist practitioners in Australia and elsewhere shows that these issues have received little attention, and that an ethno-religious socialisation approach which focuses on the unidirectional flow of religion from families and religious institutions to young people continues to define research in the field. Shiva Vasi (2011: 98-102), for example, has recently found that the Cambodian Buddhist community in Victoria serves two major purposes: 1) aiding identity maintenance and social participation, and 2) assisting with the settlement and welfare needs of the community. She explains how Cambodian Buddhist temples have established Khmer language classes which help reduce intergenerational conflict by providing young Cambodians with ethnic and linguistic links to their parents. Along with direct intervention from monks and academic study programs, Vasi describes these measures as a way to provide Cambodian Buddhists with a culturally appropriate and easily accessible means to address their welfare needs and strengthen intergenerational and community bonds.

While Vasi does acknowledge intergenerational conflicts and language barriers between first generation Cambodian immigrants and their children, she concludes that Cambodian Buddhist temples 'remain relevant to the older first-generation, as well as the young, second- and third-generation Cambodians. While this may be the case, there is little mention of *how* relevant the ethno-religious activities of Cambodian Buddhist temples are to second and third generation, whether this

relevance is waning over time, and what other socialising influences may be more significant for succeeding generations.

Similarly, as noted in the Introduction, Thanissaro (2013) has recently studied the religious values of teenage 'heritage' Buddhists in Britain, describing 'heritage' style Buddhism as that practiced in Asian countries where Buddhism has a dominant presence. It includes:

generosity, chanting, meditation, listening to Dhamma sermons at the temple, bowing to the Sangha, taking temporary ordination as novice monks, showing respect towards parents, Buddhist iconography on shrines in the home, support from the Sangha, awareness of other religions, ceremonial rites of passage, dedication of merit for deceased ancestors

Thanissaro adopts Jan Nattier's (1995: 42-9) grouping of Buddhists by comparing 'heritage' Buddhists to 'convert' Buddhists, explaining that 'convert' Buddhism is that practiced mainly by 'Caucasians or those who do *not* have ancestry from Asia'. Convert Buddhism purportedly 'tends to eschew monasticism, devotions, the ethical precepts and which looks down on the worldly benefits of Buddhism and its social activities'. Thanissaro finds that the religiosity of participants in his study is more 'convert' in style than the 'heritage' style of their parents.

Beyond the ethnic/convert paradigm

To an extent, the studies described above usefully recognise the ways second and third generation Buddhist practitioners may differ from their parents regarding styles of religiosity. While immigrant Buddhist youth may be influenced by the religious traditions of their parents, they are also portrayed as agentic individuals who question, redefine and even reject their parents' religious traditions. However, it is no longer sufficient to simply register a divergence from, or 'blending' of the ethnic and convert categories. Researching Buddhist youth identity in a contemporary national context marked by super- and hyper- diversity involves investigating the many ways young Buddhist practitioners develop contextualised dispositions and strategies for

living with others, whereby religious identifications may shift according to who is present, what kinds of relationships exist between individuals, and indeed, whether religiosity is even expressed within a particular context. Importantly, young Buddhist practitioners should not only be recognised as individuals who are exposed to a greater number of Buddhist socialising influences beyond traditional religious institutions; they also need to be recognised as creative agents who have the capacity to co-construct or deconstruct religious meanings. My own previous research on second generation Vietnamese Buddhist youth in Australia revealed that young people did not rely entirely on the religious teachings of their parents and religious institutions, and that they adopted eclectic and individualised approaches to religiosity befitting their own life experiences and circumstances (Lam, 2010: 45-7). Martel-Reny and Beyer (2013: 220) also observe that most of the 'ethno-cultural' participants in their study of young adult Buddhists actively constructed their own form of Buddhism from their own research, inclinations and experiences.

Furthermore, to say that young heritage Buddhists are more like convert Buddhists does not say very much about how they *do* practice, given that convert Buddhism described above merely seems to be the negation of heritage Buddhist religiosity. Elsewhere, descriptions of convert Buddhism have included the characteristics of regular meditation practice, sutra study, and the practice of Buddhism in its 'true' or original form, without the cultural accretions of centuries of Asian cultural influence (Coleman, 2002). However, even if we are to accept this more 'complete' definition of convert Buddhism, the continued adoption of these terms poses a number of problems. As Harding, Hori and Soucy (2014: 4-5) write, the ethnic/convert dichotomy is often treated as equivalent to the traditional/modern binary of Buddhism, with the assumption that Asian or ethnic Buddhists are more traditional and inauthentic, while Western convert Buddhists are 'implicitly associated with modern and authentic Buddhism', who do not carry the cultural baggage of ethnic Buddhists. Harding et al. (2014: 7) explain that the Buddhism of ethnic Asians is often seen as 'an automatic and unreflective part of their culture', and that ethnic Buddhists seem 'to lack the personal commitment and inner search which "converts" regard as constitutive of their own practice'. This results in a further dichotomy which is 'silently mapped onto

a methodological distinction', whereby Asian/ethnic Buddhism are studied sociologically, while Western/convert Buddhism are studied as a religion. In effect, as Harding et al. (2010: 9-10) point out, the study of Asian/ethnic Buddhist communities focuses narrowly on the extent to which these communities succeed to helping individuals 'cross the ethnic barrier, as if its purpose is primarily to assist immigrants in assimilating into mainstream culture', and that 'little attention is paid to the activities of the ethnic church as religious activity'. By contrast, scholars who focus on Western or convert Buddhists look at their religiosity, without attending to the ethnic elements of their practice. This is problematic, as some Buddhist scholars have observed, because the religiosity of White Buddhist convert practitioners is also laden with cultural nuances to which Asian Buddhists must adapt if they are to participate. For example, Smith et al. (2016: 226), drawing on Sharon Smith's case study of queer Buddhists, has found that 'Western convert Buddhism in the UK is itself racialized, gendered, sexed, and/or classed'. Smith et al. (2016) suggest that

processes of translation and cultural hybridisation that form Western convert Buddhism need further critique, particularly of the hegemonic processes of identity construction and exclusion that are involved in their development.

The point of this discussion is that a continued focus on 'ethnic' Buddhist youth and the ways their religiosity can or cannot be explained using an 'ethno-religious socialisation' approach not only reflects and perpetuates racially-based privilege; it also limits scholars from understanding the religiosity of young Buddhist practitioners from a range of ethnic backgrounds, and prevents them from recognising the ethnic antecedents of religiosity amongst young White Buddhist practitioners. As Smith et al. (2016: 4) contend, approaches to Buddhist identity need to move beyond a 'two Buddhisms' model, and take into account 'the diversity within "Asian Buddhism"' and the West. More broadly, a continued focus on ethno-religious socialisation, as a process of 'transmitting' ethnic and religious practices to younger generations frames religious socialisation narrowly as a unidirectional process whereby religion is simply handed down to young people. This approach both frames religion as a static object/commodity, and prevents scholars from recognising the role of young people

themselves beyond their ability to 'accept' or 'reject' the ethno-religious traditions of their parents. It also obscures scholars of Buddhism from recognising what Stepick (2005: 19-20) has described as the multiple and hybrid religious and identifications of second generation immigrant Buddhists, and indeed, that of young Buddhist practitioners from a range of ethnic backgrounds who may or may not have been raised within Buddhist families. Increasingly, as I argued in the Introduction, it is important to understand the ways young Buddhist practitioners engage with globalised, localised, traditional and detraditionalised Buddhist socialising influences, and the contextualised subjectivities and identifications they develop throughout this process. It is important to do this in a way which recognises the ongoing reality of racism and White, Judeo-Christian privilege in Australia, yet does not perpetuate these stereotypes in the frameworks used to study Buddhism in the West.

It may be difficult to discard the long-used paradigm first proposed by Charles S. Prebish in 1979 in his 'two Buddhisms' approach to grouping Buddhists. I will not recount or critique all the modifications or iterations of an ethnic/covert dichotomy – this has already been thoroughly addressed by numerous scholars (Quli, 2009; Harding, Hori & Soucy, 2010; Harding, Hori & Soucy, 2014; Hickey, 2010). I will however note that over the past two decades, scholars have recognised longstanding modernist reforms of Buddhism which have occurred in Asian countries occurring over many centuries (Harding, Hori & Soucy, 2010; McMahan, 2008; Snodgrass, 2007; Quli, 2009), and have sought to recalibrate discussions pertaining to the 'grouping' of Buddhists by referring to globalised, transnational and detraditionalised forms of Buddhism (Harding, Hori & Soucy, 2014: 15; McMahan, 2008; Mitchell & Quli, 2015; Tweed, 2011: Wilson, 2015: 9). These approaches usefully challenge the idea that 'modernist' Buddhism is uniquely Western, and that Buddhists can be grouped or understood according solely on the basis of static and bounded categories such as ethnicity, race and nationality.

While not all scholars advocate an abandonment of the terms 'ethnic' and 'convert', many are now highly critical of the ways these terms have been used in the literature on Buddhism in the West. Natalie Quli (2009: 17), for example, contends that while

the 'two-Buddhisms' model of Buddhism proposed by Prebish (1979) of ethnic and convert Buddhism should not necessarily be 'utterly abandoned or deemed valueless', it exacerbates issues of race and ethnicity when 'mapped onto the Orientalist notion of a modern and progressive West versus a traditional and passive East'. Jeff Wilson (2015: 9) suggests that although the terms 'can support uninvestigated racist and ethnocentric assumptions', it may be useful to retain the terms to forefront the ways race and unequal power relations shape experiences of Buddhism in Canada. I agree with Wilson here about the need to forefront issues of race and ethnicity in studies of Buddhism in Western countries, however like Wakoh Shannon Hickey (2010) I question whether this requires the use of an 'ethnic' category, due to the White privilege reflected in its use. In this regard Hickey (2010: 14) takes issues with the term 'ethnic' in particular, arguing that the term is particularly 'racializing', as it is used most often by White people to describe others 'who are not White'¹⁰. She observes that the term is unavoidably laden with 'cultural assumptions' and 'the painful implications of White privilege'. Hickey (2010: 14-19) also asserts that 'Any system for describing Buddhism in the United States also should be able to account for change over time', and suggests that an attentiveness to the 'processes by which various forms of Buddhism have taken root' can better account for the realities of Buddhist experience, including the continuing effects of racism and privilege. Taking these concerns into consideration, and in keeping with my development of a theory of Buddhist youth identity which moves beyond static and essentialised categories based on ethnicity, race, religion and nationality, I prefer to use specific terms identified by participants themselves to describe their background, and also note their hybrid, fluid and contextualised identifications.

One approach for conceptualising youth religiosity which has emerged in recent years which does not appear to group religious adherents on the basis of race or ethnicity, and also reflects the agency of religious youth, is an 'individualised' approach. This approach offers a different angle from which to understand youth religiosity by

¹⁰ Bruce Matthews (2006: xviii) makes a similar point when he says: 'Ethnic Buddhism...is clearly not "ethnic" to those who practice it'.

focusing on the role of the individual in shaping their religious trajectories. It takes into account social changes which have broadened the range of locales within which religion must be negotiated, and is particularly useful for countering assumptions about the passivity of 'ethnic' Buddhist youth. However as I contend, this approach does not comment specifically on the different levels of agency possessed by religious youth from a range of backgrounds. As I explain in the next section, an individualised approach is challenged by writings which question the liberal agency of individuals, and offer a more open-minded framework from which to consider the personal motivations of religious youth.

Individualised youth religious identity

Researchers of religious and spiritual youth in Australia and the United States have argued that young people in contemporary societies are becoming increasingly 'individualised' (Mason, Singleton & Webber, 2007: 323-336; Smith & Denton, 2005: 143-7). That is, young people see themselves as the ultimate authorities on what they should believe, which morals and ethics should guide their everyday interactions with others, which groups and events they should get involved in, if they get involved at all, and which sources to get their religious information and guidance from. There are three interrelated components of an individualised approach to youth religiosity: there is a perceived structural disconnect between young people and parents as well as traditional religious institutions; young people exercise unrestrained choice in their negotiations of religiosity, and uphold the rights of others to do the same, and; young people are inherently self-interested, and disengaged from civic and political life. These characteristics are reflected in two major nationwide studies of youth religiosity, which I now discuss.

'National Study of Youth and Religion' and 'The Spirit of Generation Y Study'

An individualised approach to youth religiosity is discussed in considerable detail in *Soul Searching* by Christian Smith and Melinda Denton (2005: 143-7), which describes findings from the National Youth Study on Religion, a large-scale study of religious youth which was recently conducted in America. Smith and Denton (2005: 143-7) adopt the term 'therapeutic individualism' to describe the ways American youth as

‘profoundly individualistic’ and self-directed, viewing themselves as authorities of their own search for meaning. As they write:

Therapeutic individualism defines the individual self as the source and standard of authentic moral knowledge and authority, and individual self-fulfillment as the preoccupying purpose of life. Subjective, personal experience is the touchstone of all that is authentic, right and true. By contrast, this ethos views the ‘external’ traditions, obligations, and institutions of society as inauthentic and often illegitimate constraints on morality and behaviour from which individuals must be emancipated (Smith & Denton, 2005: 173).

Smith and Denton (2005: 185) further identify the ‘structural disconnect of teenagers from the world of adults’ as a key factor for understanding therapeutic individualism amongst young people. They state that from a ‘broad historical perspective, contemporary teenage autonomy from adults is unprecedented’. Examples given include the long hours teenagers spend in school, access to cars, cell phones, spending money and personal televisions, as well as the long hours spent by parents at work. As a result, young people are said to spend more time with their peers than with adults. This purportedly leads to difficulties in communication between teenagers and adults, and an inability to relate to or understand one another (Smith & Denton, 2005: 196).

Michael Mason, Andrew Singleton and Ruth Webber (2005: 330-1), in their study of teenage religious youth in Australia, similarly emphasise a disconnect between young people and adults, describing a situation in which young people are reluctant to become involved in a range of ‘secondary “mediating” institutions’ which include ‘local communities, service clubs, unions, local sporting organisations, hobby groups and clubs, churches, political party branches’. The result of this, accordingly, is an increase in moral relativism, and a declining interest in matters of social concern (2007: 326-335). According to Mason et al., (2007: 330) religious individualism is often associated with: higher levels of eclecticism, or ‘picking and mixing’ from the spiritual marketplace; moral relativism; a respect for individual differences; a rejection of collective action, and; a preference for the term ‘spirituality’ rather than ‘religion’,

which is felt to be too dogmatic and rigid (Tacey, 2000). There is a preference for freedom rather than obligation or loyalty to a particular faith. More recently, Mason, Singleton and Webber (2010: 89) reiterate that a 'new, radically individualistic spiritual culture is spreading throughout the West', particularly in Britain, Canada and the United States.

Beyond a culture of narcissism

While it is important to recognise the agency of young people in their negotiations of religiosity, particularly due to the diversification of religious socialising influences in contemporary Western societies, it is useful whether young people are myopically self-absorbed, or unconcerned with the larger issues around them. As Douglas Ezzy (2003) argues, the individualisation of contemporary culture is not necessarily 'selfish'. Following Charles Taylor (1989, 1992), Berger and Ezzy (2007: 238) argue that individualism in contemporary society can progress along two distinctly different lines. The first of these possibilities, which has found expression in a number of accounts on the spiritual lives of young people both in Australia and internationally (Berger & Kellner, 1973; Swidler, 2002: 53; Mason et al., 2007: 330-1), is that individualism is self-centred, narcissistic and vacuous, is antithetical to community and political citizenship, and leads to social degeneration (Taylor, 1992: 55-6). This is described as an extreme, 'deviant' form of individualism, which can turn into a kind of 'anthropocentrism' (Taylor, 1992: 58, 67-8). The second possibility posited by Charles Taylor (1992: 35, 45) is that individualism can be viewed as a form of 'authenticity', or an attempt by the individual to fashion his or her moral and ethical framework for living in the world. Taylor (1992: 76) explains that in this case, authenticity is the creative and original construction of the self. He thus contends that we should not be so quick to dismiss authenticity, and see in individualism only a culture of increasing narcissism. Nor should we be ready to endorse it uncritically as it is. Rather, we need to recognise the various directions in which society is moving 'by making more palpable to its participants what the ethic they subscribe to really involves' (Taylor, 1992: 72). In other words, we need to become more aware of narratives of meaning

that are negotiated by individuals when they construct identities, and be open to the idea that these narratives might be based upon moral and ethical principles.

A middle ground between 'ethno-religious' and 'individualised' approaches

There is little doubt that individualism has emerged as a key theme in studies of religious youth in Western societies. As mentioned, religious individualism describes a shift in power from religious institutions such as the church, to the individual. However, insofar that it locates authority within the individual, an individualised approach leaves little room for a possible synthesis between traditional and individualised forms of religious practice, in which the religious lives of young people might be profoundly altered by choice, indeterminacy and freedom, yet also strongly shaped by parents, religious leaders or significant others. This interplay between structural and individual factors speaks to findings from recent studies of youth religiosity which evidence multidirectional flows between religious youth and other religious socialising influences. Gallagher (2007, cited in Hopkins, Olson, Pain and Vincett, 2010) for example, has observed that children serve as a 'religious source' in American Protestant church services, and that they influence the religiosity of adults. Following this point, Hopkins et al. (2010: 316) suggest that children can be conceived as both 'social becomings' and 'competent agents' at the same time – an approach which offers a middle ground between seeing young people as either strongly shaped by religious socialising agents, or as autonomous agents who craft their own religious identities on the basis of individual preferences.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, this is the approach I pursue in this thesis – that of a middle ground between a heavily structured 'ethno-religious socialisation' approach, and a strongly agentic 'individualised' approach. To clarify, I am not suggesting here that young people possess the same level of agency as parents, religious institutions and other religious socialising influences. Indeed, processes of minoritisation are likely to limit contemporary young Australian Buddhist practitioners' levels of agency in a similar way to that described in the literature on Asian Buddhist communities in the United States and Canada (Hickey, 2010: 9-10). In this regard, Andy Furlong and Fred Cartmel (1997: 111-3) argue that while collective

social identities and transitions have broken down, scholars who discuss the impact of late or high modernity tend to overemphasise individual reflexivity, overestimating 'the extent to which individuals are able to construct their identities'. As evidenced by Furlong and Cartmel's (1997: 113-4) study of the transition to adulthood in late modernity, individuals' opportunities and life chances in late modernity are still significantly shaped by larger social structures. Indeed, Ratto & Boler (2014: 11) suggest that it is also useful to consider the extent to which 'liberal assumptions of individualised agency' are applicable to all, and to be sensitive to power relations which may influence individual agency. This perspective is particularly applicable to minoritised religious youth, for whom structural exclusion is a regular part of everyday experience.

In Australia, studies of reduced notions of citizenship and belonging have largely focused on young Muslims. This is likely due to the fact that Muslims are the most vilified religious group in Australia at present (Markus, 2016). Yet it is worthwhile considering how the concerns addressed by this research might apply to young Buddhist practitioners as well, given that, as Halafoff et al. (2012) observe, issues of exclusion are also likely to affect young Buddhists. As I discuss in the next section, these concerns are partly addressed by a 'minoritised' model of defensive religious identity. According to this approach, religious youth are uniformly oppressed by a prevailing host culture, and need to react defensively. I contend that while this approach usefully draws attention to issues of belonging and exclusion amongst young Buddhist practitioners in Australia, it is also challenged by research which shows how social categories such as gender, ethnicity, race, class and nationality intersect with religion to produce varied forms of oppression, belonging, or both. It is also challenged by studies which highlight the variability of religious identity and belonging across multiple contexts, and emphasise the fluidity and ephemerality of religious identity. Finally, a minoritised approach assumes an antagonistic relationship between religious youth and the prevailing host culture, and overlooks more productive ways of being in the world which are shaped by religious teachings.

In effect, a heavy focus on marginalisation as a defining feature of religious identity may have little to do with the experience of religion itself, and how young people may seek to develop modes of selfhood and relationality which harness religion in a productive way to deal with a variety of personally significant issues beyond that of exclusion. I argue that while these writings do not constitute a distinct field of study, they all challenge reified categorisations of religious identity and call for the development of an approach to youth religiosity which emphasises the fluidity and contextualisation of minoritised identities, and the utilisation of religion by young people for individually-defined purposes.

Minoritised model of defensive religious identity

A minoritised approach to youth religious identity is most evident in studies of Muslim and Hindu identity and citizenship. Particularly since the events of September 11, 2001, a number of scholars of Islam in the West have noted that Islam has been portrayed by media and political commentary as incompatible with Western culture and values (Saniotis, 2004: 54; Mansouri, 2010: 254; Northcote & Casimiro, 2010: 142). Subsequent media and political portrayals of Muslims as enemies of the West have attracted numerous analyses by scholars (see for example, Aly, 2007; Mansouri & Wood, 2008; Woodlock, 2011). Many of these studies point to the same conclusion – that Muslim citizenship and thereby Muslim identity are under attack. For young people in particular, scholars have noted that exclusionary discourses and practices tend to have a destabilising effect on religious identity. As such, minority religious youth are rendered as victims in the face of reduced notions of citizenship and belonging, who must react defensively against a hostile receiving culture.

In particular, media and political discourses have also been studied for their effect on Muslims' sense of national belonging. In Australia, such studies have analysed the ways exclusionary media depictions have effectively denied Muslims Australian citizenship by frequently constructing Muslims as the 'Other', with Islam being antithetical to Australian values and the West in general (Aly, 2007: 38). Aly (2007: 28) argues that these media and political narratives construct the Muslim diaspora as a monolithic entity ignoring their ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences, and

reinforces religion as a primary marker of identity. She argues that these attitudes in turn reflect on Muslims' own sense of identity, leading them to reconstruct their identities in ways which reinforce religion as the most salient marker of identity. Aly (2007) notes that while some participants from her study of Muslim identity and media interaction have attempted to disengage with media rhetoric and the resulting 'victimhood' of Muslim minoritisation, others have united over a shared sense of injustice, blurring ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences in order to construct new narratives of belonging which place religion as the primary factor in the construction of identity. Rachel Woodlock (2011: 392-398), similarly, notes that Muslim identity has been portrayed in Australian media and political discourse as a threat to Australian culture, and that perceptions of Muslims as 'having a shared sense of scrutiny and discrimination' has led many Muslims scholars to use this as a basis for their conceptualisations of Muslim identity in the West.

One such example is Adis Duderija's (2010: 97) theorisation of Muslim identity construction, which he claims can be understood through a framework called the 'self-other civilizational boundary mutual identity construction dialectic'. In other words, Muslim identity is the product of interdependent, binary processes between the (Muslim) self and the (Western) 'other'. These processes include an oscillation between benevolence and distrust, and a perception of how the other views the religious self (2010: 98). Duderija (2010: 99) emphasises the binary nature of this dialectical process, arguing that the process of immigrant religious identity construction can be examined through 'dichotomisations of inclusiveness and exclusiveness' between the self and the other.

Scholars researching second generation Hindu immigrants have developed similar conceptualisations of Hindu youth identity. Prema Kurien (2005: 441-3, 447-51), borrowing Portes and Rumbaut's (1996) terminology 'reactive ethnicity', notes that some second generation diasporic Indian Hindus deal with colonialism and perceived attacks to their religious and ethnic identities by developing a 'reactive religiosity', or a victimised discourse to denigrate other religions and cultures, and to simultaneously affirm their own Indian and Hindu identities. She argues that American Hindus are

often stigmatised on the basis of being a non-white minority, and as a result, tend towards a 'militant religious nationalism', whereby they utilise the discourse of multiculturalism to argue that they are 'an oppressed global minority, to highlight a history of victimisation, and to argue for the need for recompense and self-determination' (Kurien, 2005: 441). Muslims, Christians and the British are all seen to have 'sullied' Hindu culture and Indian civilisation, with the solution being to adopt 'Hindutva' ideology which advocates a return to a Hindu state and a rejection of Muslim, Christian and Western culture.

Hickey (2010: 9-10) also notes how scholars of Buddhism in the United States have drawn attention to the ways Asian immigrants and their descendants have formed groups which centre around ethnic and political concerns at least partly in response to White racism, propaganda and violence (Tanaka, 1999). Hickey (2010: 10) maintains that while cultural and linguistic continuity may have internal significance for immigrant groups, it is important 'not to overlook external forces that create both a need for places of refuge, and ambivalence about practicing alongside Caucasian converts'.

Critiquing a minoritised approach to youth religiosity

A minoritised or defensive discourse in studies of minority youth religious identity illustrates the ways in which minority youth religious identity negotiation is profoundly shaped by structural influences such as racism, White privilege and exclusion. This exclusion often involves an interaction of religion with other social categories such as race, class, gender and nationality to produce intersecting forms of oppression. For example, Fatheena Mubarak (1996: 132-144) reveals how notions of national belonging amongst Muslim women in Australia are affected by religious and cultural factors such as wearing the veil, and gendered understandings of Western fashion. Karen Turner (2010: 48) also adds that many Western Muslim convert women practice multiple identities, in some cases hiding their Muslim identity from family members and work colleagues to avoid upsetting families and colleagues, as being Muslim is often seen as Anti-West in Australia, rather than spiritual. Turner (2010: 48)

notes that Western convert women can be a minority within a minority, belonging neither inside or outside of Islam.

Greg Noble and Scott Poynting (2010) comment particularly on the ways belonging is shaped by the intersection of religion with nationality. Their work on Arab and Muslim youth in Australia, examines the ways in which prevailing stereotypes of Muslims and Arabs as the 'Other', and the resultant vilification of Arabs and Muslims in public spaces has led to many Muslims feeling less like Australian citizens than they once did. Noble and Poynting (2010: 500) describe this as a 'pedagogical process' in which Muslims and Arabs learn that they are not considered to be fully, or even minimally 'Australian'. They observe that Muslims and Arabs experience the 'loss of a sense of citizenship' as a result of not feeling free to walk in social spaces, due to their discomfort in such spaces (Noble & Poynting, 2010: 496-7, 502).

While these experiences of exclusion require a sustained analysis, particularly in light of continued threats and attacks to religious minorities, as Hopkins et al. (2010: 325) suggest, it is useful to take into account the ways religious youth may occupy multiple subject positionings which may include 'correspondence', 'compliance', 'challenging' and 'conflict'. Because a minoritised approach frames youth religious identity as a 'self-other' dialectical exchange, it can perpetuate essentialised dichotomies of both the 'West' and 'the rest'. This dichotomy is too simplistic to account for young Buddhist practitioners who may be both insiders and outsiders – for instance, the children of Western Buddhist converts and the children of first generation Asian Buddhist immigrants. In these cases, the process of religious identity negotiation entails juggling a range of subjectivities.

A minoritised or defensive approach to understanding minority youth religiosity has also been critiqued on the grounds that it overlooks more productive ways of 'being in the world' (McDonald, 2008: 203), whereby young people may respond to the challenges of living in conditions of detraditionalisation, risk and uncertainty by drawing upon religious teachings. For example, Harris and Roose (2014: 808) describe how participants in their study of Muslim youth citizenship used religious teachings as

a 'spark for personal action and individual responsibility', framing religion as a 'positive civic enabler' for young Muslims. They assert that this provides an alternative way of viewing Muslim youth identity than as a 'defensive mechanism' in a 'hostile social climate in ways that might lead to retreat, marginalisation or radicalisation'. According to Harris & Roose (2014: 808), religious teachings thus offer young Muslims with 'pliable material' for constructing a worldview and practices of engagement which are consistent with contemporary depictions of youth life trajectories as 'individualised' (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007).

Similarly, Andrew Yip and Sarah-Jane Page (2013: 138-9) have found that religion contributes to the promotion of social justice amongst British youth, serving to inspire 'positive and authentic personal and social change'. Yip and Page (2013: 138) found that:

religious faith – specifically in terms of individualised beliefs – offers...the much needed ontological anchor with which [multifaith British youth] ground themselves in the face of competing narratives and truth claims about being young sexual beings in contemporary society...religious faith is a personal moral compass; a light at their feet as they tread the uneven and meandering path of young adulthood, with multiple turns and stops where the benefits and dangers are not immediately clear.

Helen Berger & Douglas Ezzy (2007: 47) also emphasise the grounding value of religion for young people in their study of teenage Witches in Australia, Britain and the United States. As they state:

Young Witches...see Witchcraft as providing them with a worldview, ethics, and spiritual path that at once speaks to their contemporary lives and provides them, if not an anchor, an ethical system that permits them to shape-shift in a shifting world.

These examples speak to the ways religious teachings can provide young people with an 'anchor' for living in detraditionalised times, and may facilitate positive and productive interactions between religious youth and others within the social contexts they inhabit. They provide a contrasting perspective to viewing youth religiosity as a defensive reaction, or something which is utilised for self-fulfilling purposes. They also draw attention to the need to explicate the religious teachings young people draw upon to develop more productive modes of selfhood and relationality, which I will outline in the next chapter.

Developing a new theory for conceptualising Buddhist youth identity negotiation

In this chapter, I have critiqued three existing approaches to youth religiosity, and have argued that while each of these approaches addresses key aspects of contemporary Buddhist youth experience, they do not completely account for the religious identity negotiations of young Australian Buddhist practitioners. More specifically, I contend that while an ethno-religious socialisation approach helps explain the continuing influence of families and religious institutions for young Australian Buddhist practitioners, little attention is given to new and emerging religious socialising influences in a detraditionalised and globalised religious environment.

An individualised approach looks at the ways young people exercise agency in their religious identity negotiations, and as discussed earlier, this is pertinent to studying youth religiosity in light of young people's movement away from traditional religious authority and their negotiation of multiple religious sources. However, an individualised approach does not specify how power dynamics shape the lives of people from different religions, due to their different connections, knowledge and location in society. An individualised approach emphasises agency over structural constraints, when minority religious studies have shown that youth religious identity can be profoundly shaped, sometimes in negative ways, by popular media (Aly, 2007: 28), political discourse (Mansouri & Wood, 2008; Woodlock, 2011: 395), families and religious institutions. Additionally, an individualised approach contends that young

people are 'not strongly influenced by social concern nor much involved in citizenship activities' (Mason et al., 2007: 328-9), when, as studies of Wiccan youth show, there is the potential for altruistic concerns to be involved (Berger & Ezzy, 2007: 237-8).

A minoritised model of defensive religious identity addresses issues of social exclusion due to structural inequality, which is applicable to minority religions in general. However, to the extent that minoritisation is framed as a static phenomenon which uniformly oppresses religious youth across a range of social contexts, a minoritisation model does not account for the fluid and contextualised nature of religious identity (Hopkins, 2011; Noble, 2008). A minoritised model also establishes an antagonistic relationship between minoritised religious youth and Western host countries, overlooking the possibility of pro-social, civic-building capacities amongst minoritised religious youth. This idea is challenged by research in Australia which shows that, for example, young Muslims utilise religion as a 'positive civic enabler' (Harris & Roose, 2014: 808).

In light of these considerations, I propose that a new approach for conceptualising Buddhist youth identity should be developed. Drawing from research which shows how young people use religion as a resource to develop ethical frameworks for living in detraditionalised times, I contend that a study of contemporary Buddhist youth religious identity requires an attentiveness to the Buddhist teachings which have the potential to shape modes of selfhood and relationality. I suggest that these include the teachings of *anattā*, *pratītyasamutpāda*, *śūnyatā* and *anicca*, and that these teachings further provide an impetus to consider recent work on religiosity which evidences the contextualisation, depoliticisation, interconnectedness and ephemerality of religious identity. In the next chapter, I discuss these concepts and the work of other theorists which will be used to develop a theory for Buddhist youth identity negotiation.

Chapter 3: Buddhist Youth Identity Re-examined

In the previous chapter, I critiqued three key existing approaches to youth religiosity and explained the need for a new approach to Buddhist youth identity. In this chapter, I offer a new approach to Buddhist youth identity which develops upon the critiques discussed in the previous chapter. In particular, I propose that this new approach should recognise: the decentering of Buddhist institutions and the influence of multiple Buddhist socialising influences; stereotypes and inequalities based on race and ethnicity without reproducing them in the literature on youth religiosity; the agency of young people in negotiating religious identity without overlooking the ways they are subject to structured inequalities; the fluid and contextualised nature of religious identity; and the religious teachings which serve as an 'anchor' for young people to develop ethical frameworks for living in detraditionalised times.

To this end, I propose that Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and Bauman's (2001) theories of individualisation, as well as Giddens' (1991) and Bauman's (2004) work on self-identity in late modernity provide a useful framework for conceptualising youth religious identity negotiation which meets most of these criteria. I also contend that Maffesoli's (1996) concept of disindividuation, as well as Elias's (1978; 1991; 1994) ideas about the self in relation to society further help to develop a framework for Buddhist youth identity which is compatible with Buddhist teachings about the self. I firstly discuss Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and Bauman's (2001) theories of individualisation and how they explain the necessity of identity negotiation in conditions of detraditionalisation. I discuss how the theory of individualisation helps address many of the critiques discussed in the last chapter regarding ethno-religious, individualised and minoritised approaches to youth religiosity, yet I also reiterate the importance of considering Buddhist teachings about the self in a theoretical framework for Buddhist youth identity. I then explain Buddhist teachings about the self, and discuss recent work on youth religiosity which reflect Buddhist teachings about the self. In this regard, I describe the how Maffesoli's (1996) concept of disindividuation, as well as Elias's (1978; 1991; 1994) ideas about the self in relation to

society can be used to help develop a theory of youth religiosity which builds on the relevance and applicability of individualisation, while also accounting for Buddhist teachings about the self and the reflection of these ideas in recent work on youth religiosity. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the theory of 'disindividualisation' I develop, which combines the theory of individualisation with the concept of disindividuation.

Detraditionalisation and the necessity of 'identity' negotiation

A number of theorists have described the declining authority of traditional institutions, the breakdown of metanarratives and the unpredictability of life trajectories, and while different terms have been used to describe this era, for example, late or high-modern, post-traditional, post-modern, liquid-modern, I use the term 'detraditionalised' like Paul Heelas (1996) to describe these social changes and the effect on the individual. I prefer this broader term as my work draws on theorists who can be described as both late/high modern as well as post-modern. Heelas (1996: 2) describes detraditionalisation as:

...a shift of authority: from 'without' to 'within'. It entails the decline of the belief in pre-given or natural orders of things. Individual subjects are themselves called upon to exercise authority in the face of the disorder and contingency which is thereby generated.

Like Giddens (1991), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and Bauman (2001), I concur that a theory of individualisation provides a useful framework within which to situate contemporary Buddhist youth identity negotiation, as it emphasises the necessity of individual decision-making regarding matters of identity in an era where Buddhism has developed detraditionalised and globalised forms. I contend that young Australian Buddhist practitioners are not exempt from the task of decision-making regarding identity, despite Buddhist teachings which destabilise the notion of identity. A focus on individualisation also further helps address many of the critiques which were discussed in the previous chapter in relation to the three key approaches to youth religiosity.

Individualisation

Firstly, in comparison to an *ethno-religious socialisation* approach, whereby Buddhist identity is seen to be passed down to young people within ethnically homogenous religious communities, a theory of individualisation recognises the agency of the individual in choosing whether or not to engage with traditional ethno-religious institutions, challenging racial stereotypes which convey Asian Buddhist religiosity as passive and uncritical. Individualisation as described by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim takes into account the role of the individual in piecing together his or her own biography, as this is no longer 'handed down' by the preceding generation. As Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: 45-47) state:

Living a life of one's own means that standard biographies become elective biographies, 'do-it-yourself biographies', risk biographies, broken or broken-down biographies... the choosing, deciding, shaping human being who aspires to be the author of his or her own life, the creator of an individual identity, is the central character of our time.

The theory of individualisation put forward by Beck & Beck-Gernsheim (2002) has particular relevance to the theorisation of Buddhist youth identity due to its recognition of the decentering of traditional religious institutions, the spread of socialising influences and the changed role of the individual in working out for themselves which sources to engage with, and how to do so. We have already seen in Chapters 1 and 2 how Buddhism has developed detraditionalised and globalised forms, and how young people in particular are positioned as those most likely to engage with multiple, diffuse Buddhist socialising influences. The theory of individualisation recognises the changed significance of the family and religious institutions in this regard, and the necessity of piecing together one's own religious biography in a detraditionalised era. Traditions, if they still play a role, 'must be chosen and invented, and they have force only through the decisions and experience of individuals' (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 25-6). In this regard, according to a theory of individualisation, families and religious institutions may still influence the religious identity negotiations of young Buddhist practitioners, but it is young Buddhist

practitioners themselves who decide whether and how to engage with these religious socialising sources (as well as others).

Individualisation is also a useful alternative to the individualism described by an *individualised model* of youth religiosity. Here it is useful to carefully distinguish between *individualism*, *individualisation* and an *individualised* model of youth religiosity. An individualised model, as discussed in the previous chapter, makes assumptions about the *individualism*, or personal autonomy and self-serving interests of young people. An individualised model is useful in that it affords young people with a significant amount of individual agency, however its assumptions about the personal autonomy and self-serving interests of young people have not been supported by evidence of religiously-informed civic participation amongst young people. By contrast, *individualisation* frames identity construction as a necessary task in conditions of detraditionalisation, which additionally offers the possibility of altruistic action. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: 22-3, 26) describes a process in which people are faced with the breakdown of old traditions, classifications and identities, requiring them to piece together their biographies from a multitude of choices amidst a prevailing ethic of self-fulfilment and achievement.

Giddens (1991: 3) does not speak of individualisation per se, but like Beck and Beck-Gernsheim and Bauman, he highlights the complexities faced by individuals in the development and continual revision of 'self-identity', which involves negotiating the juxtaposition of a 'puzzling diversity of options and possibilities'. As Giddens asserts:

In the post-traditional order of modernity, and against the backdrop of new forms of mediated experience, self-identity becomes a reflexively organised endeavour. The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems...the more tradition loses its hold, and the more daily life is reconstituted in terms of the dialectical interplay of the local and global, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options (1991: 5).

Giddens' (1991: 8, 75) position seems paradoxical, for while he appears to preference individual agency, describing the self as 'not what we are, but what we make of ourselves', he also likens the feeling of living in late modernity as 'riding a juggernaut' of change beyond human control. However this paradox is central to Giddens' (1991: 2, 33, 185) overarching assertion, that self-identity both shapes, and is shaped by, social factors, and that the reflexive project of self-construction is a 'reflexive process of connecting personal and social change'. Giddens (1991: 189) describes this as 'a dilemma of unification versus fragmentation', in which individuals are impelled to unify their lives through the construction of coherent narratives, yet this is done against a backdrop of fragmentary changes in late modernity. Bauman's work on the negotiation of identity in conditions of 'liquid modernity' expresses a similar point – that while individuals are engaged in the 'frantic search for identity' (2001: 333), 'the places to which the individuals may gain access and in which they may wish to settle are melting fast and can hardly serve as targets for "life projects"' (Bauman, 2001: 318). For Bauman (2001: 319), there is no hope of settling into a final point of destination, as

disembeddedness is not an experience which is likely to be repeated an unknown number of times in the course of an individual life since few if any 'beds' for 're-embedding' look solid enough to augur the stability of long occupation...forcing men and women to be constantly on the run.

Bauman's point about ongoing fluidity in identity negotiation resonates with the Buddhist teaching of *anicca* or impermanence particularly in relation to the self, and can be usefully built upon, although not without critique, as I discuss later. It is useful to point out, however, that while Bauman (2001) emphasises the futility of long term planning in his assessment of individual trajectories, Giddens' offers a more optimistic interpretation, which portrays individuals as capable of effecting social change. According to Giddens, agency and structure mutually constitute one another – in his terms, they form a 'duality'. As Giddens (1991: 32) writes:

Changes in intimate aspects of personal life...are directly tied to the

establishment of social connections of very wide scope...for the first time in human history, 'self' and 'society' are interrelated in a global milieu.

Further emphasising the potential of human action in conditions of individualisation, Beck & Beck-Gernsheim (2002) point out that individuals should not necessarily be seen as self-absorbed engineers who plan or utilise individualisation for their own selfish ends. In this regard Bauman (cited in Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: xvi, 4; see also Bauman, 2001: 105) points out that it is a mistake to assume that individualisation is a 'social condition' which is 'arrived at by a free decision of individuals', and driven by egoistic needs. As Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: xxii) maintain, stereotypical conceptualisations of individualised societies as 'me-first' are 'one-sided', and 'there are signs that point toward an ethic of "altruistic individualism"'. Similarly, Charles Taylor's (1992: 55-6) conceptualisation of authenticity in identity construction posits that individuals do not always construct narcissistic identities, but are capable of ethical aspirations. In their study of teen Witches in the West, Douglas Ezzy and Helen Berger (2007: 45-7, 237-8) endorse Taylor's (1992: 35, 45) account of authenticity, which is described as the development of self-awareness and discovery that helps individuals creatively construct their ethical and moral framework for living in conditions of globalisation, multiplicity and uncertainty. This perspective stands in contrast to conceptualisations of *individualism* which associate it with a 'greater preoccupation with the self and less concern for the well-being of others, or for the condition of one's society as a whole' (Mason et al., 2010: 105), leading to social involvement only as a matter of self-serving interests (Mason et al., 2010: 108).

Finally, individualisation usefully challenges the assumptions of a *minoritised model of defensive religious identity*, which frames religious identity as static or consistent across a range of social contexts. Individualisation, by contrast, recognises the ways social life has become 'differentiated' (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 46). As Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: 46) write, people are:

...constantly changing between different, partly incompatible logics of action, they are forced to take into their hands that which is in danger of breaking into

pieces: their own lives. Modern society does not integrate them as whole persons into its functional systems; rather, it relies on the fact that individuals are not integrated but only partly and temporarily involved as they wander between different functional worlds.

Thus there are different 'functional worlds', where religious youth might be welcomed in some contexts but face discrimination in others; they may be 'constantly changing' between different sets of attitudes towards their religiosity, and developing contextually-dependent dispositions themselves. Additionally, if 'modern society does not integrate them as whole persons into its functional systems', and individuals are 'only partly and temporarily involved', it is unlikely that religious youth will be perceived or treated in a wholly positive or negative way, destabilising the idea that individuals can maintain a single 'minoritised' religious identity in different contexts over time.

In light of these critiques, I argue that a theory of individualisation offers a more robust account of youth religiosity when compared to the three dominant approaches to youth religiosity I have described in this thesis, which is applicable to young Australian Buddhist practitioners. This assertion is supported by the fact that other major studies of youth religiosity have also utilised individualisation as a framework for theorising youth religiosity (Berger & Ezzy, 2007; Yip & Page, 2013). Yet it is worthwhile considering the extent to which individualisation offers a complete account of Buddhist youth religiosity, due to Buddhist teachings which destabilise the notion of identity. In the next section I elaborate upon these Buddhist teachings, and how a study of Buddhist youth identity negotiation calls for a 'Buddhist' interpretation of Giddens, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim and Bauman's ideas regarding selfhood and relationality.

Buddhist teachings about the 'self'

Although there are varying conceptions of how the self, and more specifically, continuity within and across lifetimes is conceived by various Buddhist traditions, the concept of *anattā* (Pali)/*anātman* (Sanskrit), is considered to be one of the key insights

of the Buddha (Lopez & Buswell, 2014: 242, 3088). As with Buddhist teachings in general, the concept of *anattā* should be understood within the context of overcoming suffering, and the attainment of nirvana. According to Peter Harvey (2013: 60-61), *anattā* does not in itself mean 'no-self'; rather, it is a practical teaching aimed at overcoming illusory ideas about the self and self-identification. According to early Buddhist teachings, identification with something as 'I', 'Self' or 'mine' is a form of attachment, as when these things change or become other than what one desires, this leads to suffering (Harvey, 2013: 61). Building an identity 'based on one's bodily appearance or abilities, or on one's sensitivities, ideas and beliefs, actions of intelligence...is to take them as a part of an 'I'', and is also considered a form of attachment leading to suffering (Harvey, 2013: 59). From this perspective, the development of an identity based on ethnicity, nationality or religion should be avoided.

Within this context, the teaching of *anattā* is intended as a 'palliative' or 'antidote' to ignorance, suffering and the cycle of rebirth, rather than a philosophical denial of the 'self' (Harvey, 2013: 60, 64; Lopez & Buswell, 2014: 242-244; 404). As Harvey (2013: 60) and other Buddhist scholars have noted, the Buddha as conspicuously silent when asked whether or not the self exists, as he neither wanted to affirm the idea of a permanent self, or deny the existence of the self in any sense. Indeed, early Buddhist teachings consider the person (*pudgala*) to be a product of five aggregates or *skandha*'s – materiality (*rūpa*), physical sensation (*vedana*), perception (*samjñā*), impulses (*samskāra*) and consciousness (*viññāna*). According to Buddhist teachings, although each of the *skandhas* can be thought of as constituents of the 'self', they are merely a collection of constantly changing items in a functional relationship. In this sense, the 'person' or 'self' is simply a conventional label to denote this functional relationship (Harvey, 2013: 59). Each of the *skandhas* is furthermore said to be an object of grasping or identification as 'I', or 'myself' (Harvey, 2013: 55). *Anattā* is proposed as the teaching, or the means through which individuals come to realise that each of the *skandhas*, and indeed all *dharma*s (phenomena) are 'empty' (*śūnyatā*) of self (Lopez & Buswell, 2014: 3963-4). As Smith et al. (2016: 87) point out, the recognition of *anattā* and 'the lack of an essential "core" self' could be seen in their

study of race, sexuality and gender, amongst their British Buddhist participants who were members of FWBO¹¹.

The concept of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) has been further developed in the Madhyamaka school and applied to the doctrine of *anattā*; it is considered to be 'the lack or absence of intrinsic nature...in any and all phenomena, the final nature of all things...the ultimate truth...' (Lopez & Buswell, 2014: 3964). The concept of *śūnyatā* is closely related to *pratītyasamutpāda* (also known as 'dependent origination' or 'conditioned arising' (Harvey, 2013: 65)), which is the teaching that 'all phenomena are dependently arisen, they lack, or are empty of, an intrinsic nature characterized by independence...' (Lopez & Buswell, 2014: 3964). As Harvey (2013: 65) notes, the doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda* also 'complements the teaching that no permanent, independent self can be found'. Such an idea finds expression in the relational practices of particular ethnic groups which practice Buddhism. For example, as David M. McMahan (2008: 198) observes, in 'traditional Asian societies, the person is not an individual prior to the network of social relationships' he or she is part of. Victor Sōgen Hori (1994: 49) clarifies this point by writing:

In the West, the person is an independent being, who exists autonomous from social roles and relations. For most societies outside of the European Enlightenment, however, a person is not an independent being...; quite the opposite, a person has identity and uniqueness only because of his or her social relationships...My identity as a person depends on my relationships with other persons, and ultimately, with place, land and nation, with history and time.

Although this is potentially an oversimplification of ideas about the individual in both Asian and Western societies, this characterisation is worth considering particularly in light of individualised conceptualisations of youth religious identity in Western

¹¹ FWBO is an abbreviation for Friends of the Western Buddhist Order; as Smith et al. (2016) observe, FWBO is a more widely recognised term than the more recent, Triratna Buddhist Order.

societies, which, as discussed in the literature review, tend to attribute young people with an inordinate amount of agency and self-determination. A Buddhist conceptualisation of youth religious identity which takes into account the above factors would serve as a counterpoint to highly individualistic renderings of youth religious identity as seen in the literature, and potentially grapple with recent work on youth religious identity in the West, which have emphasised multiplicity, contextualisation and ephemerality.

The notion of ephemerality finds expression in the Buddhist teaching of *anicca*, or impermanence. Impermanence is closely related to the concept of *anattā* as it highlights the ever-changing and conditioned nature of existence, and frames all 'self' constructions fleeting manifestations which are ultimately illusory and harmful. As Harvey (2013: 336) writes:

When the whole panorama of experience is seen to be made up of processes – mental or physical, internal or external, past, present or future, subtle or gross – that are non-lasting, unreliable and insubstantial, then there can be a disenchantment (Pali *nibbidā*, Skt *nirvidā*) with, a letting go of, these processes. As a person thus comes to recognize all that he or she has fondly identified with as 'I' or 'mine' as actually changing, conditioned and subtly unsatisfactory, it is directly known that these cannot be truly 'possessed' as 'mine', or be a true identity as 'I', an essence, 'my Self'. As each thing is seen in this way, this allows a relinquishing of any attachment to or identification with it...This will be the more complete, the more it is realized that everything is non-Self; that 'Self' is an empty concept. Not only an empty concept, but a harmful one: for taking something changeable as a permanent 'I' can only lead to suffering when that thing changes. And to protect 'I', we often cause suffering to others.

The relationship of impermanence to the concept of *anattā* also finds empirical resonance in work on contemporary Buddhist practitioners, as Smith et al. (2016: 255) have found that amongst 'white middle-class convert Buddhists',

Their ongoing encounter with the Buddhist teaching of a *anattā*, the lack of a fixed essential self, can lead to their sense of identity shifting so that it becomes more fluid, provisional and realized as contingent.

Drawing on these ideas, the construction of an identity based on religion which is consistent across a range of contexts has the capacity to cause suffering to others if it is defended or protected in an aggressive or violent way; this can of course be observed in cases of religious nationalism and cases in which religion is politicised or misused as an ideological justification for acts of terrorism. Even when this is not the case, a Buddhist identity, if it is developed or expressed at all, should be recognised as impermanent and ultimately empty; there is no permanent or stable religious self, but only fleeting and contextualised expressions of religious identity. A similar point is made by Sharon Smith (2012: 189), who notes that ‘identities’, ‘identifications’ and identity politics’ are distrusted by many Buddhist practitioners, who seek to move away from the egotistic ‘small self’ to the ‘larger self’ of Enlightenment. As Smith (2012: 189) points out:

these perspectives would regard the concept of the self as being more appropriately described as a “self-in-process” that cannot be reduced to any particular identity position as these can only be provisional descriptions of the subject.

In summary then, the Buddhist teachings about the self I have discussed above emphasise the following points: what is usually considered to be the self is a convergence of multiple factors or elements; all phenomena are interdependent and lack an intrinsic self; all phenomena including the self are impermanent or constantly changing, and; an attachment to the idea of self leads to suffering for oneself and others. Returning to the question of whether or not these Buddhist teachings about the self are compatible with ideas about selfhood and identity according to individualisation, it is likely that individualisation theory’s emphasis on identity ‘construction’ needs to be tempered in the case of young Buddhist practitioners. I suggest that while it is still crucial to locate Australian Buddhist youth religiosity within

a framework of individualisation due to the way this theory draws attention to processes of individual decision-making regarding religious identity, it is necessary to couch this in terms of religious identity 'negotiation' rather than 'construction', and to additionally consider other work which deals more specifically with the deconstruction of identity. To more adequately capture processes of selfhood and relationality amongst young Buddhist practitioners, I contend that it is necessary to consider postmodern ideas about identity and recent work on the fluidity, contextualisation and ephemerality of identity. While Bauman (2001: 321, 333) emphasises the fluid and temporal nature of identification, describing individualisation as a 'never-ending, always incomplete, unfinished and open-ended activity', he also describes it as a necessary task which 'vagabonds, people without fixed addresses and sans papiers, struggle daily'. As he maintains,

The main, the most nerve-wracking worry is not how to find a place inside a solid frame of social class or category, and – having found it – how to guard it and avoid eviction; what makes one worry is the suspicion that the hard-won frame will soon be torn apart or melted.

Bauman's emphasis, then, is on the ongoing, yet ultimately futile challenge of establishing and then securing a place for oneself – a final resting point which offers individuals a sense of reprieve. What is useful to point out, for the purposes of considering the applicability of his ideas to Buddhist practitioners, is his use of terms such as 'nerve-wracking worry' (Bauman, 2001: 322); 'struggle' (Bauman, 2001: 16, 321); his description of 'afraid and anxious' individuals; and his references to the establishment of identity as 'the satisfaction of "arriving"' (Bauman, 2001: 319) and 'a cosy shelter of security and confidence' (Bauman, 2001: 330-1). In relation to the Buddhist teachings about the self described earlier, it is questionable, or even unlikely, that Buddhist practitioners would attempt to shore up any permanent or stable sense of self, and experience anxiety, fear and worry for being unable to do so, given their likely recognition of Buddhist teachings of impermanence, emptiness and non-self. As noted earlier, the doctrine of *anattā* is aimed at dispelling illusory notions regarding

the self, and is intended to alleviate, rather than create or perpetuate suffering for individuals.

Against this backdrop, I suggest that it is useful to consider work on identity which more closely aligns with Buddhist teachings about the self. I propose that Maffesoli's (1996) concept of 'disindividuation' (which refers to the loss of the self within a collective subject,) along with Elias's (1978; 1991; 1994) ideas regarding the self and society, provide a useful theoretical grounding of these ideas, and that the concept of disindividuation needs to be considered alongside Giddens (1991), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and Bauman's (2001; 2004) work on selfhood and relationality in order to more adequately theorise Buddhist youth identity negotiation.

Towards religious identity erasure?

As Stuart Hall (1996: 1) observes, thinkers from various disciplinary fields have become critical of the idea of an 'integral, originary and unified' identity. In this section, I outline some of the critiques which have been levelled at this idea of identity, particularly in relation to religious identity, and suggest how they are compatible with Buddhist teachings about the self. I then explain how they will be developed to theorise Buddhist youth identity negotiation with reference to Elias's (1978; 1991; 1994) ideas about the self in relation to society, and Maffesoli's (1996) concept of disindividuation.

The first critique of identity I discuss here is that of contextualisation and depoliticisation. Regarding contextualisation, a number of studies have adopted an approach to studying religious identity which looks at the way it can be 'mapped' across different social contexts. For example, Hopkins et al. (2010: 318) have drawn upon their research of young Christians in Scotland to argue that 'intergenerational relations need to be understood as situated in relation to the site-based practices that are now central to the development and experience of young people's religious identities'. They find that place-making is a defining feature of Christian youth religiosity as young people increasingly experience and negotiate religiosity in multiple sites beyond the family context. These sites include: 'grandparents' homes, the

journey to and from church, experiences of schooling, youth group practices, peer group relationships and popular culture' (Hopkins et al., 2010: 325). The importance of mapping religious identity across a range of contexts becomes salient in light of critiques which state that identity cannot be adequately understood with reference to key social categories such as ethnicity, race or religion. As Noble (2009: 876) points out, categorical analyses of identity 'freeze frame' identity and prevent us from recognising the 'situatedness' and 'temporality' of identity which emerges through the contingencies of a particular setting. In this regard, Noble (2009: 888) cautions against reducing people to 'a caricature for the sake of some broader political project', and draws attention to the ways individuals might enact identities on the basis of their 'competencies and accomplishments', such as in a work setting, rather than social categories such as religion, race or gender.

Similarly, Floya Anthias (2016: 176) has drawn attention to the ways 'static' or 'essentialised' conceptions of identity overlook 'processes of becoming' (Anthias, 2002: 491-5), and contends that 'identity' is more usefully perceived using 'narratives of location and positionality'. Identity for both Noble and Anthias is thus conceived as a dynamic process rather than a state of being; it is fluid or changing from one context to the next, and in order to recognise the fullness of identity it is necessary to observe the ways identity expressions change across different contexts. This approach has been adopted in studies of youth identity, which as Noble (2009: 878) points out, have recognised that identity is 'fluid, hybrid and shifting from place to place and over time, and varying in degrees of intensity and attachment'. This draws attention to the Buddhist view of identity as *anicca*, that is, impermanent, or changing from one context to the next, which will be important to develop in a theorisation of Buddhist youth identity.

The second critique of identity I deal with is that of its inherently empty nature. Hall (1996: 4-5) refers to this as:

the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been

called its constitutive outside that the 'positive' meaning of any term - and thus its 'identity' - can be constructed.

In this regard, 'identity' can only exist to the extent that it contrasts with, and can be defined through its boundary with the 'Other'. This relationality has been emphasised by Bottomley (1991), who stresses the integral role of 'recognition' in giving life to particular identities. Accordingly, identity emerges through a dialogic process with others who may validate, or indeed, invalidate particular identity claims.

The dialogic nature of identity negotiation, and the need to be recognised by others draws attention to another Buddhist teaching about the self – that of interdependence. In addition to the boundary-drawing role of the 'Other' in identity formation, interdependence can be recognised in work which recognises the interconnectedness between members of a religious community. Danièle Hervieu-Léger (2000)¹² of course has made the notion of interconnectedness a key feature of her analysis of religion, describing religion as a 'chain of memory' which gathers past, present and future community members, and serves as a tradition which forms the basis of a community's existence. There is an extensive literature on youth religiosity which emphasises the ways parents shape youth religiosity. This was discussed earlier to an extent in relation to an ethno-religious socialisation approach to youth religiosity, however it can also be observed in nationwide studies of 'majority' (predominantly Christian) youth (for example, Mason et al. (2007), Smith & Denton (2005). As mentioned earlier as well, Hopkins et al. (2010) have pointed out the multi-directionality of religious flows between young people and their parents. While the interconnectedness of families and religious communities is explored in my study in the Ethno-Religious Socialisation chapter, I also contend that it is important to consider the ways interconnectedness manifests more broadly in the religious identity negotiations of young Australian Buddhist practitioners, to an extent which might appear unusual to sociologists of religion. More specifically, I seek to investigate how

¹² The English translation of Hervieu-Léger's *La Religion pour mémoire* (1993) initially published in French.

the teaching of *pratītyasamutpāda* or dependent co-arising might be harnessed in Buddhist youth identity negotiation. In this regard, I find Kenneth Gergen's (1991: 28) perspective on interconnectedness to be compatible with the Buddhist teachings of emptiness and dependent co-arising. According to Gergen, changes occurring in postmodern times have produced new ways of thinking about the self in relation to others:

At the most subtle level, these changes in social patterns bring about a profound shift in our conception of ourselves and others. Our traditional belief in ourselves as singular, autonomous individuals gives way. Where in the interior lies the bedrock self? Are not all the fragments of identity the residues of relationships, and aren't we undergoing continuous transformation as we move from one relationship to another? Indeed, in postmodern times, the reality of the single individual, possessing his/her own values, emotions, reasoning capacities, intentions and the like, becomes implausible. The individual as the center of cultural concern is slowly being replaced by a consciousness of connection. We find our existence not separately from our relationships, but within them.

This description challenges the idea of a 'singular, autonomous' individual, and frames 'connection' as a key feature of selfhood and relationality, arguably to a greater extent than writings which simply note the ways different generational groups might influence one another in terms of religiosity. Indeed, it also reflects other Buddhist teachings about the self which I described earlier – impermanence, emptiness and non-self.

While aspects of contextualisation, depoliticisation, interconnectedness and impermanence can be observed in existing studies of religiosity, what I offer here is an outline of how these factors might coalesce in the religious identity negotiations of young Australian Buddhist practitioners, which I seek to develop into a theory of religious identity negotiation throughout this thesis. I propose that contextualisation, depoliticisation, interconnectedness and impermanence, as well as emptiness and

non-self, need to be part of a theorisation of Buddhist youth identity negotiation, and that they constitute the religious framework young Buddhist practitioners draw upon as an 'anchor' to meet the challenges of living in detraditionalised times. I suggest that Elias's ideas about the self in relation to society, as well as Maffesoli's concept of 'disindividuation', are particularly useful for theorising these concepts. I outline these ideas in the next section.

Norbert Elias on the self and society

Elias (1978; 1991; 1994) was primarily concerned with the way sociologists perceived of sociological categories such as the 'individual' and 'society', or 'agency' and 'structure' as static and isolated objects. Rather than thinking about single individuals or society in this way, he posited that sociologists should think of 'interdependent groups of individuals', and the 'figurations' they form with each other. He argued that these figurations were constantly changing in response to individuals' personalities and their habitus, linking processes of psychological development (what he called *psychogenesis*) with processes of social development (*sociogenesis*) (Loyal & Quilley, 2004: 3; Van Krieken, 1998: 3, 6). Thus, in order to study social development, Elias argued that it is necessary to study individual psychological development. Van Krieken (1998: 5-6) explains that Elias viewed individuals as social to their 'very core', challenging the idea that individuals could have an 'autonomous' identity with which they could interact with others. He also argued that individuals should be perceived in 'processual' terms, existing only in relation to their interactions with others within a dynamic web of social relationships such as a family, church, ethnic group and so on (Van Krieken, 1998: 53). As Elias (1978: 118) himself put it, 'it would be more appropriate to say that a person is constantly in movement; he not only goes through a process, he is a process'.

There are several implications of an Eliasian approach to understanding the link between the individual and society, which can be discussed in relation to Buddhist youth identity negotiation. Firstly, as the study of social development, or *sociogenesis*, involves studying processes of psychological development and transformation, or *psychogenesis*, understanding the way young Buddhist practitioners negotiate

conditions of detraditionalisation requires an attentiveness to Buddhist teachings about the self, and how these teachings are likely to shape perceptions of personal, and therefore, social transformation amongst young Buddhist practitioners. Furthermore, the negation of a distinct, autonomous self in Elias's writings through his emphasis on studying 'interdependent' groups complements the Buddhist concept of *pratītyasamutpāda* outlined earlier, and as we will see in the following chapters, is helpful for interpreting the findings in this study particularly regarding belonging and participation. Finally, Elias's (1978) emphasis on the processualism of human social life draws attention to the ever-changing nature of religious identity, and helps capture the dynamism of religious identity 'negotiation' (as opposed to 'construction', which implies a finite end point). This interpretation of human social life is compatible with the Buddhist teaching of *anicca*, or impermanence regarding the self, and draws attention to the strategies and dispositions developed or adopted by individuals to work on the self. It provides a useful theoretical grounding to explain the contextualisation of religious identity, or the way religious identity expression may change, or not be expressed at all in different social contexts. These links are discussed in more detail in the data analysis chapters.

Similarly, Maffesoli's (1996) writings provide a useful commentary on the individual and contemporary sociality, and can be linked to Buddhist teachings about the self.

Disindividuation and neo-tribalism

In the writings of Maffesoli can be found a radical critique of the idea that we are currently living in a period of modernity, characterised by rationalism and the separateness of the individual. According to Maffesoli (1996: 11) 'we are witnessing the tendency for the rationalized "social" to be replaced by an empathetic "sociality"'. He argues that the previous 'rational era' was built on ideas of 'individuation' and 'separation', while the present 'empathetic' era is 'marked by the lack of differentiation' and "'loss' in a collective subject' – a phenomenon Maffesoli describes as 'neo-tribalism'. 'Neo-tribes', as Maffesoli contends, are temporary 'micro-groups' (155) that are formed for specific purposes, whose members are generally bound by shared sentiment. They are 'groups distinguished by their members' shared lifestyles

and taste' (Maffesoli, 1996: x), and as Maffesoli (1996: 76) explains, are 'characterized by fluidity, occasional gatherings and dispersal'. Neo-tribalism requires us to pay attention to the 'relational' nature of social life, and to focus on the role played by each person within a tribe, rather than seeing each person as in individual someone who can be 'sufficient unto himself', or in control of their destiny Maffesoli's (1996: 10, 97, 123). Neo-tribality is also characterised by 'disindividuation, which refers to 'the saturation of the inherent function of the individual and the emphasis on the role that each person (persona) is called upon to play within the tribe' (Maffesoli, 1996: 6).

In relation to Buddhist youth identity negotiation in contemporary Australia, Maffesoli's descriptions of neo-tribalism and disindividuation can be linked to Buddhist teachings about the self, as well as recent work on religious youth identity negotiation. As with Elias's emphasis on processualism, Maffesoli's description of neo-tribalism draws attention to the dynamism and human social life, and the constant movement of individuals between different social groups. As we shall see in the Participation chapter, neo-tribalism also draws attention to the relational ties within participatory communities, which is significant in light of the maintenance of traditional, hierarchical networks of relations in Asian Buddhist communities. As Hori (1994: 49) notes, the identities of individuals in traditional Asian communities are based on their relationships with other people – a view which emphasises interdependence rather than individual uniqueness. Additionally, the concept of disindividuation bears particular affinity to the Buddhist teaching of *anattā* or no self, and will be explored in light of recent work which emphasises the ephemerality and contextualisation of youth religious identity.

To summarise at this point, Buddhist teachings about the self are reflected in various studies which point towards the impermanence, emptiness and interdependence of religious identity. I argue that these themes can be further developed in a theorisation of Buddhist youth identity negotiation to extend upon Beck and Beck-Gernsheim and Bauman's theories of individualisation as they has been applied to recent work on youth religiosity, which looks at the ways young people harness religious teachings to craft ethical frameworks to anchor themselves in detraditionalised times.

Individualisation, disindividuation and disindividualisation

The theory of disindividualisation I develop in this thesis draws primarily from Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and Bauman's (2001) theories of individualisation, Bauman (2004) and Giddens' (1991) work on identity, as well as Michel Maffesoli's (1996) concept of disindividuation. I also draw from Norbert Elias's (1978; 1991; 1994) ideas regarding the self in relation to society. Firstly, I argue that Beck and Beck-Gernsheim and Bauman's theories of individualisation, and Bauman and Giddens' work on identity help account for the ways participants showed evidence of taking personal responsibility for negotiating Buddhist identity in an era where Buddhism has become detraditionalised and globalised. Individualisation frames identity construction as a necessary task in conditions of risk, insecurity, pluralisation and detraditionalisation; it also refers to the construction of 'do-it-yourself' biographies which generate 'programmes of actualisation and mastery' in these conditions (Giddens, 1991: 2-9). The theory of individualisation helps account for the ways young Buddhist practitioners in my study were required to make choices regarding which religious socialising influences to engage with, whether and how to express their religiosity in a range of contexts, how to navigate exclusion and belonging, and how to participate in civic and political life. It helps account for the 'work on the self' young Buddhist practitioners were required to undertake to negotiate Buddhist identity, and for the ways they had to make themselves anew across a range of religious and non-religious social contexts.

However, for the participants in my study, the end goal was not necessarily to construct a distinct religious identity. While individualisation frames identity construction as a necessary task in late modernity (Giddens, 1991: 3), participants in my study were more apt to question whether a distinct self could exist at all, and whether the construction of a distinct self was even a desirable goal. In this regard, I contend that Norbert Elias's (1978; 1991; 1994) ideas regarding the self in relation to society are useful for conceptualising the process of religious identity negotiation of young Australian Buddhist practitioners. Of particular relevance are: his ideas about the individuals existing only in relation to others; his rejection of static conceptions of people; his emphasis on fluidity and long term processes of change; and the

connection he saw between individual psychological processes and social change. As I show in this thesis, these ideas are useful for conceptualising the ways participants valued their interdependence with others over robust expressions of religious identity, the way their religious identities were expressed differently, or not at all, according to the context, their recognition of the 'self' as processual, or something which changed over time, and their perception of work on the self as a way to help others.

I also contend that Michel Maffesoli's (1996) concepts of 'tribalism' and 'disindividuation' add further conceptual clarity to the religious identity negotiations of young Australian Buddhist practitioners. Maffesoli's (1996: 10-11) emphasis on the ways individuals are called upon to play a role or 'persona' within a tribe, and his assertion that the individual or persona 'can only find fulfilment in his relation to others', places an emphasis on 'empathetic sociality' rather than rational individualism, helping to account for the fact that participants emphasised social harmony and interconnectedness over the expression of individual religious identity, and did not necessarily feel the desire or compulsion to develop or defend a distinct religious self. Maffesoli's (1996: 10) insistence on shattering the 'illusions of the individual in control of himself and his destiny', and his description of the ways individuals wear changeable 'masks' which provide only temporary identifications also speaks to the ambiguity and the fluidity of religious identity negotiations of young Australian Buddhist practitioners. I contend that Maffesoli's term 'disindividuation' usefully encapsulates his framing of the self in such conditions by describing the loss of the self within a collective subject.

However, while these ideas are relevant to my findings, disindividuation does not sufficiently capture the process of purposefully working on the self that individualisation does; rather, disindividuation is described as a random, fleeting and undirected 'being together' simply for the sake of sociality (Maffesoli, 1996: 21, 23). Thus, given that my participants' experiences of religious identity negotiation shared some similarities with individualisation as well as disindividuation, as described above, the term I adopt in this thesis – disindividualisation – is a selective amalgamation of these two concepts. As such, I wish to point out that what I refer to as

‘disindividualisation’ is not considered to be the opposite of individualisation. I contend that disindividualisation presents a new way of thinking about processes of selfhood and relationality with regard to religion, which suggests that young Buddhist practitioners make the purposeful decision to become, or remain religiously indistinct in conditions of risk, insecurity, plurality and detraditionalisation. I contend that young Buddhist practitioners’ negotiations of religious identity are also supported by Buddhist teachings about the self, particularly of *pratītyasamutpāda* (dependent origination), *anicca* (impermanence), *anattā* (no-self) and *śūnyatā* (emptiness). The concept of *pratītyasamutpāda* encourages young Buddhist practitioners to act in a way which recognises their interdependence with others; the concept of *anicca* helps young Buddhist practitioners become more aware of the changing nature of religious identity; the concept of *anattā* supports the tendency to become or remain religiously indistinct; while the concept of *śūnyatā* – that all things lack an intrinsic nature – reflects the futility of defending an identity based on social categories such as religion. This theory will be developed through a discussion of the findings regarding Australian Buddhist youth socialisation, belonging and participation in the data analysis chapters. In the next chapter, I explain the research approach and methods used to investigate processes of Australian Buddhist youth identity negotiation.

Chapter 4: Research Approach and Methods

This chapter begins by discussing the development of the research questions, then explains how my positionality has informed my research approach. It also explains the research approach and methods, and how data were collected and analysed. I finish by discussing issues related to data collection and analysis.

Development of research questions

A large aspect of the research project involved conducting exploratory research on a group which has been underrepresented in the literature – young Buddhist practitioners living in Western societies. As discussed in the previous chapter, however, I undertook a thorough review of the relevant literatures before developing the research questions and conducting the field research. This included reading the literatures on: Buddhism in Australia and the West; minority religious youth identity construction; sociological perspectives on religion – with a particular focus on religious identity construction and the nature of contemporary religiosity; religion in Australia – with a focus on young people and the practice of minority religions; and civic and political participation – with a particular focus on Buddhists, religious minorities and young people. This research, along with my positionality, informed the development of my research approach and methods. I explain my positionality in the next section.

Positionality

As a ‘second generation’ Vietnamese Buddhist practitioner living in Australia, I have participated in a range of activities within and beyond the Australian Buddhist community which have given me firsthand experience of the complexities of negotiating a Buddhist identity in an Australian context. Over the past ten years I have held minor organisational and leadership roles in relation to young adult Buddhist practitioners in Australia, including being a volunteer coordinator for an intrafaith Buddhist event, being a president of a university Buddhist society, and being a Buddhist representative for a number of multifaith youth networks. I have also engaged in various volunteering activities within the Victorian Buddhist community,

including writing and proofreading documents, tutoring at a number of Buddhist temples, being a volunteer Buddhist SRI teacher, and other odd jobs involving the Buddhist community. I have subsequently met Buddhist practitioners from various ethnic communities, mainly in Victoria, and in this regard, can be considered an insider with experiences of both life as a young Buddhist practitioner in Australia, and broader initiatives within the Australian Buddhist community.

Due to my ethnicity, I have also been exposed to issues of race and marginality which have attuned me to the complex ways this manifests in Australian society. Coming from a Vietnamese background, I have often been questioned about my ethnic background and whether or not my parents are Buddhist. Yet I have felt that such questions have had little to do with the unique, personal experiences which have drawn me towards Buddhism, and have subsequently developed a need to counter simplistic and externally imposed descriptions of 'ethnic', 'immigrant' or 'cradle' Buddhism, whereby Buddhism is purportedly 'passed on' from one generation to the next. As Smith et al. (2016: 5) write: 'We need to develop another typology that would not define Buddhist adherents by their ethnicity, and infer the nature of their involvement from that'. Their point speaks to the necessity of moving beyond typologies for studying Buddhist practitioners which make simplistic assumptions about their engagement based on ethnicity. Additionally, in my involvement with the Australian Buddhist community, I have encountered both young 'Asian' and 'Western' Buddhist practitioners, as well as those who are neither or in between, and I have come to recognise that young Buddhist practitioners from diverse backgrounds need to be studied in order to develop a more comprehensive picture of the next generation of Buddhist practitioners.

My lack of affinity to bounded identity markers such as 'Vietnamese', 'Australian' and 'Buddhist' has also given me an insight into the potential issues this creates with regard to identification and belonging, given that the majority of Buddhist institutions I have experienced cater for particular ethnic groups – even the 'non-sectarian' ones. I have been forced to confront this dilemma as part of my involvement in multifaith youth groups, where my participation has depended on me acting as a 'Vietnamese

Buddhist’ – a label I have found limiting. Issues of belonging have also surfaced due to living in an Australian context in which conversations about religion, particularly amongst other people my age, are actively avoided. I have found myself withholding information about myself regarding my religious involvement in such contexts due to unfavourable, or cautious reactions from others when information about my religiosity has surfaced. As a result, I have found myself living in at least two different worlds – one Buddhist, and the other, non-Buddhist – which seldom collide. These experiences have given me an appreciation of the ways issues of exclusion also affect Buddhist practitioners, which I consider to be worth exploring given that much of the literature on marginalisation amongst religious youth focuses on Muslims. They have also made me cognizant of the process of moving from one social context to the next, where perceptions regarding Buddhism must be routinely negotiated.

My own interpretation of Buddhist teachings as a lived philosophy has drawn me towards an understanding of Buddhism as ‘lived’, or situated in practice. My volunteering experiences within the Victorian Buddhist community, and my role in the past as a volunteer coordinator have made me aware of the efforts of young Buddhist practitioners to contribute to society, and the way this links to the idea of putting Buddhist teachings into practice. This has played a part in me choosing ‘participation’ as a key dimension for investigating Buddhist youth identity negotiation. It has also given me a keenness to provide an alternative picture of youth religiosity, in the sense that studies of religious youth tend to focus on whether or not young people understand, and can explicate traditional religious teachings, or the meanings of religious traditional practices. For instance, Martel-Reny and Beyer (2013: 221), in their recent study of Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist youth in Canada, assert that there is a lack of Buddhist socialisation from parents to ‘pass on Buddhism to children’ – as if Buddhism is a static set of beliefs which can simply be passed down. My view is that while such an approach may be appropriate for understanding the nature of religiosity for young people practicing other religions, it can tell researchers very little about the nature of Buddhist youth experience.

An understanding of Buddhism as a lived philosophy, particularly amongst young people, is supported by Thanissaro's (2013: 14) research on teenage heritage Buddhists in Britain, which shows that young people place more emphasis on 'living out their Buddhism' outside the temple, rather than simply 'holding beliefs'. Furthermore, as Pagis (2010: 486) and Janine Schipper (2012: 208) point out, Buddhism emphasises direct embodied knowledge over conceptual knowledge. Following this view, young people, more so than others, usually have much more to experience and learn, and a hesitation or unsureness about accepting Buddhist teachings or concepts, let alone explicating the beliefs they hold, should not be considered unusual. My own research on second generation Vietnamese Buddhist practitioners living in Australia shows that young Vietnamese Buddhists adopt age appropriate strategies whereby they accept Buddhist teachings 'for now', with the understanding that these teachings still need to be verified through further investigation and experience (Lam, 2010: 35-7). Investigating the ways Buddhism is 'lived' by young people in the context of their unique biographies, rather than focusing on belief or participation in religious institutions, is thus a key focus of this thesis. My experiences have given me an appreciation of the richness or complexity of Buddhist engagement, and has led me to endorse an investigation into the ways Buddhism is meaningful to young Buddhist practitioners within the context of their lives.

Research questions

From my review of the literature, as well as my own experiences as a young Buddhist practitioner in Australia, I developed research questions in relation to the three broad research foci I identified: socialisation, belonging and participation.

1. Socialisation

- What are the socialising influences contemporary young Australian Buddhist practitioners engage with?
- To what extent do family, friends, Buddhist institutions and other religious socialising influences shape Buddhist youth identity negotiation, and vice versa?

- What do young Australian Buddhist practitioners make of the process of negotiating multiple Buddhist socialising influences, in terms of the opportunities and challenges this presents?
2. Belonging
- How do social categories such as race, ethnicity and nationality affect religious identity negotiation?
 - What do young Australian Buddhist practitioners think of the notion of 'Buddhist identity', and is there any conflict between being Buddhist and being Australian?
 - If young Australian Buddhist practitioners experience marginalisation, what strategies do they use to address it?
3. Civic and political participation
- In what ways do young Australian Buddhist practitioners participate in civic and political life? What are some key institutions or pathways through which they engage with civic and political life? What are some reasons for participating or not participating?
 - How do young Australian Buddhist practitioners perceive of their Australian citizenship, including their rights, responsibilities and civic and political participation?
 - In what ways do young Australian Buddhist practitioners define participation – does Buddhist philosophy influence these perceptions?

I also sought to find out participants' understanding of Buddhist teachings about the self, and how this might have affected their experiences of religious socialisation, belonging and participation.

Approach

Lived religion

To investigate the research questions above, I adopt a 'lived religion' approach to investigate Buddhist identity negotiation amongst young Australians. Understanding the ways religion is 'lived' by religious practitioners involves: being sensitivity to the ways religion is woven into the everyday lives of practitioners in a multitude of

religious and non-religious contexts; appreciating the dynamism of religious experience; seeking to understand religious identity negotiation from the viewpoint of religious practitioners themselves; and normalising religious 'bricolage', or improvisation at an individual level.

In the first instance, lived religion has been described by Meredith B. McGuire (2008: 12) as an approach which enables scholars to understand 'how religion and spirituality are practiced, experienced, and expressed by ordinary people (rather than official spokespersons) in the context of their everyday lives'. In other words, a lived religion approach constructs religion as something which is unrestrained by religious institutions, and has personal meaning for individuals in their daily lives. Ammerman (2007: 5) makes a similar point, utilising the term 'everyday religion' to emphasise the importance of looking for the many ways religion may be interwoven in the lives of 'non-experts'. She contends that while individuals' experiences of 'organised religion' and 'official' ideas about religion are still important, 'they are most interesting to us once they get used by someone other than a professional' (see also Ammerman, 2013; 2014a & Ammerman, 2014b). As such, she argues that sociologists 'cannot afford to dismiss a form of lived religion just because it does not measure up to orthodox theological standards' (Ammerman, 1997: 210). A lived religion approach deconstructs the dualism between the sacred and profane (McGuire, 2008: 21; Orsi, 1997: 8), substantially broadening the field in which religious experience can be studied by researchers. Such an approach is relevant to my study, as the globalisation of Buddhism has more recently spread Buddhist ideas and practices beyond traditional religious institutions, making the task of Buddhist identity negotiation more complex and multifaceted than in previous decades (McMahan, 2008). Buddhist identity negotiation now involves moving in and out of different contexts, both 'sacred' and 'profane', with different rules and norms regarding religion in each. Yet, much of the previous work on Buddhism amongst young people in Australia, having been conducted over two decades ago, has focused on religious institutions, and ethno-religious maintenance specifically. A study which looks at the ways Buddhist youth identity is experienced by young Australians themselves is thus both timely and necessary from a lived religion perspective.

In the second instance, lived religion frames religion as a dynamic phenomenon, which changes over time according to individuals' social contexts and everyday needs. As Robert Orsi (2003: 174) explains, religion is continually reinterpreted by individuals 'within the circumstances of his or her histories, relationships, experiences', rather than remaining as a static entity which is passed down from one generation to the next. Religion thus needs to be understood as something which is responsive to the historical contingencies of individuals' lives; a set of beliefs and practices with ever-shifting modes of expression, even if core beliefs remain the same. Such an approach is useful for my study, as it has the capacity to take into account the unique needs of young Buddhist practitioners in contemporary Australia. Many scholars have noted the ways young people in Western societies have been affected by detraditionalisation, precarity and ontological insecurity relating to employment and the establishment of life trajectories (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Harris, Wyn & Younes, 2010; Roberts, 2011; White & Wyn, 2013). In this context, a lived religion approach is useful for accounting for the experiences and priorities of young people as they negotiate a detraditionalised 'risk society' (Beck, 1992), in which life trajectories become increasingly uncertain, and marked by the pluralisation of choices.

While a lived religion approach offers greater possibilities for understanding the complexities of religious experience for young Buddhist practitioners, it does come with a set of challenges. Indeed, the broadening of religious horizons has prompted Danièle Hervieu-Léger (1997: 22) to caution:

...it is necessary to emphasise the difficulty of identifying the several contexts, at once cultural, geographical, and historical, in which 'lived' religion manifests itself, for this 'lived' religion is, by definition, fluid, mobile, and incompletely structured'.

As Hervieu-Léger (1997) suggests, any attempt to specify the particular social contexts in which religion is experienced becomes a futile task, as religious experience may involve the intersection of multiple contexts and historical, cultural and geographical

factors which simultaneously converge in the lives of individuals. Indeed, the expansive terrain of lived religion includes, as Orsi (1997: 7) identifies:

...the places where humans make something of the worlds they have found themselves thrown into, and, in turn, it is through these subtle, intimate, quotidian actions on the world that meanings are made, known, and verified. Religion is best approached...by men and women at this daily task, in all the spaces of their experience.

While this description seems to remove the previous institutional boundaries in which religion has been studied, it does not mean that religion is a completely subjective individual experience, as 'people construct their religious worlds together, often sharing vivid experiences of that intersubjective reality' (McGuire, 2008: 12). A lived religion approach serves as a call to imagine alternative ways to understand religious experience amongst individuals, positioning religious experience as a creative endeavour which takes on meaning in the ways religion is 'used' by individuals themselves. As Orsi (1997: 7) explains, lived religion is 'concerned with that people do with religious practice, what they make with it of themselves and their worlds'. Accordingly, 'There is no religion apart from this, no religion that people have not taken up in their hands' (Orsi, 2003: 172). This helps explain why 'practice', or 'religious culture in action' (Roof, 1999: 41) is considered to be one of the most important aspects of lived religion (Hall, 1997: xi). With such a definition, improvisation and the ability to pick and mix from various sources through 'cultural bricolage' (Orsi, 1997: 7) becomes 'the norm, rather than the exception' (McGuire, 2008: 185). A lived religion approach views individual interpretation as normal, and indeed, constitutive of religion as a discernible phenomenon. This perspective helps reduce the stigma typically associated with the re-negotiation of religion – a concern often associated with young people as they reject, replace or redefine the religious traditions of their parents (Mason et al., 2007). It also represents a viable alternative to an ethno-religious socialisation approach, which focuses narrowly on the religious socialising role of parents and religious institutions, and recognises the role of the

individual in negotiating a contemporary religious landscape in which Buddhism has developed detraditionalised and globalised forms.

The next section discusses how a narrative method is useful for studying Buddhist youth identity negotiation. As I contend, a narrative method complements a 'lived' religion by providing a suitable framework or structure for young Buddhist practitioners to connect events or episodes in a way which is meaningful to them as individuals (Ammerman, 2003: 213).

Narrative method

Contemporary studies of religious identity tend to make use of the idea of identity as an act of narrative construction, an idea proposed by Ammerman (2003; 2014a) in her theorisation of religious identities. Such studies include Lori Peek's (2005) study of second generation Muslims in America, Buchanen, Dzelme, Harris & Hecker's (2001) study of being gay/lesbian and spiritual/religious, Visser-Vogel, Westerink, de Kock & Bakker's study of Christian and Muslim adolescents, and Campbell's (2005) study of 'lived religion' on the Internet.

As Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou (2011) point out, narratives are contextually produced stories which communicate a particular 'version' to the interviewer. In this regard, narratives are 'emplotted' or placed in a temporal order by individuals in a way which is significant to them, and reflects the relationship or rapport developed with the interviewer. The act of emplotting requires judgement, and draws individuals into a process which enables them to reflect on the overall process of navigating multiple religious socialising influences. This is important for my work as my aim is to understand young Buddhist practitioners' views on the process of moving across different social contexts where religious identity must be negotiated, and what modes of selfhood and relationality they develop throughout this process.

Squire et al. (2011) and Jane Elliott (2005: 6) further point out that narratives are almost always about change over time. Elliott explains that a narrative approach pays attention to people's lived experiences and the temporal nature of these experiences.

In this regard I draw attention to Ammerman's (2003: 223) description of religious narratives as autobiographies which are continually disrupted, revised, and carried from one place to another. Ammerman (2003: 223-4) writes:

The study of religious identity is not the study of external assaults on an unchanging religious core. Rather, it is the study of religious narratives that are themselves the product of ongoing interaction, both among the diverse human participants in the drama and between them and whatever unpredictable sacred experience they recognise in their midst.

Religious identities, according to Ammerman (2003: 219, 223) can thus be conceived as narratives told by individuals, rather than actual manifestations of a religious self. Challenging the idea that the study of religious identity is a 'study of external assaults on an unchanging religious core', Ammerman unsettles any assumptions about an autonomous and unchanging self, and draws attention to the act of narrativity itself. In doing so, Ammerman leaves room for the possibility of both identification and non-identification, which is compatible with Buddhist teachings which challenge the notion of a discrete and unchanging self. These themes were indeed observed in my study, as many participants mentioned that their use of such identity labels was often fluid and contextualised, varying according to the situation and who they were interacting with. For example, participants mentioned that they might use different labels to portray their religiosity/spirituality, or refrain from providing this information according to whether or not they were interacting with a friend or stranger, whether the topic of conversation related to the sacred or profane, whether or not they were completing a census form, or whether or not they were in a religious setting. The idea of non-self and interdependence also came up in interviews, and will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

Finally, as Ammerman (2003: 218; 2014: 8) points out, individuals are themselves part of multiple narratives which can be that of larger religious institutions, and that these narratives often find their way into the contextualised narratives told in an interview context. In this way, individuals' connections to religious institutions and other

religious socialising influences become implicated in the interview process. This is useful for my thesis as it provides an insight into the ways young Buddhist practitioners perceive of multiple religious socialising influences, and what modes of selfhood and relationality they develop in their religious identity negotiations.

Interviews

As I was interested in gathering in-depth responses from participants regarding the questions above, the most suitable way to do this was by conducting qualitative, semi-structured interviews. As Earl Babbie (2013: 346) notes, a qualitative interview is an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interviewer has a general plan of the topics to be covered, rather than a set of questions which must be followed word for word, or in a particular order. Steinar Kvale (1996: 3-5) suggests that once the interviewer has established the general direction of the interview, they should respond to participants in such a way that allows the participant 'to tell their own stories of their lived world'. This approach was appropriate for my study, as it was important for me to build an understanding of young Australian Buddhist practitioners' religious lives in a way which captured their unique experiences and perceptions regarding Buddhist identity and practice. It was also important to illustrate the inadequacy of the ethnic/convert divide, to provide a more nuanced picture of religious participation than what is assumed to be ethnic Buddhist practice, centering around ethnic religious institutions, and convert Buddhist practice, which purportedly eschews ethnic Buddhist practices in favour of practices such as meditation and the study of Buddhist philosophy. Ammerman (2003: 223), in discussing the vexed relationship between religious identities and religious institutions, puts forward a case for understanding religious identity as a malleable narrative which is 'disrupted by unexpected events and deliberate innovation'. By conducting in-depth interviews with participants, I was able to listen to stories explaining contradictions in practice and commitment, and changes to practice, identification and commitment over time.

Qualitative interviews have been used in previous studies of young Buddhists and other minority religious youth which focus on religious identity formation and social

engagement. Ruth Fitzpatrick (2014) has recently used semi-structured, in-depth interviews of Euro-Australian Buddhists in Australia in order to gain an insight into their attitudes towards Buddhist social engagement, and examine the way contemporary social and cultural concerns shaped these perceptions. Glenys Eddy (2012) has employed interviews, participant observations and teaching materials to research experiences of socialisation and self-transformation amongst Western Buddhists in Australia. Amarnath Amarasingam (2008) has also combined surveys with qualitative interviews to study the interaction between ethnicity and religion amongst Sri Lankan Tamil youth in Canada.

For my study, I decided that participant observations would not be necessary, as I was more interested in exploring the perceptions of participants relating to identity negotiation, belonging and citizenship and the ways they narrativised their reflections on these, rather than examining social interactions in religious settings. I also decided that the use of surveys was not necessary, as my aim was to understand the meanings behind the use of particular identity labels, as well as experiences of belonging, marginalisation and citizenship. By conducting qualitative interviews, I was also able to hear from participants themselves about their perceptions of identity labels such as 'Buddhist', 'Australian' or 'Chinese', whether or not they were used, the circumstances in which they were used (or not), and the meanings of such terms if and when they were used. Ben, for example, said that although he felt that the term 'Buddhist' was 'useful' for describing his practice, it was important to recognise that this was a label describing a path, and not to use the term in a way which separated oneself from others. He explained:

I feel that...ultimately, by putting the term Buddhist there, it can be useful. But if you use it in a way to separate yourself from others, you're doing the opposite of its intention. You're not trying to separate yourself from other people. You're really trying to find the shared humanity, or, humanity's always a good one because Buddhism says everything has primary consciousness, you're trying to find the shared sentience in everything. Um, so but ultimately, relatively you can describe yourself as Buddhist, but you need to at some stage

recognise, that's a label. And really, it's about taming the mind, and Buddhism's the path to do that. So you do need to let go of that, holding too strongly. Doesn't mean you shouldn't uphold and protect it philosophically, debate the position, tradition if you need to, but if you get thrown around by that debate, you've not really got the point. So I think holding onto it tightly isn't good.

Such nuances would have been impossible to collect if participants had simply ticked a box on a survey to describe their religious or ethnic identities. This approach is consistent with Smith et al.'s (2016: 3) finding that participants from their study of race, sexuality and gender in British Buddhism made 'considered choices as to how they describe their ethnic identity for themselves as opposed to others' categorisation of them'. The interviews also enabled me to pick up on other identity markers that were significant to participants themselves, such as sexuality and relational ties.

Ethics

The project, titled 'Self-perception, praxis and belonging', received ethical approval from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) as a low risk application on 17/3/2014, project number CF/760 – 2014000306. Minor amendments relating to sample selection were also approved by MUHREC on 6/5/2014. These included changes to recruitment: enabling flyers to be distributed to Buddhist temples and Buddhist conferences, using a revised recruitment poster; and changes to procedures, enabling interviews to be conducted via Skype for interstate participants.

Recruitment

After receiving ethical clearance to conduct the research, a flyer was created about the project (Appendix 2). This was distributed via a number of channels to try to reach Buddhist practitioners from a range of ethnic and denominational backgrounds. As data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows¹³, Buddhists in Australia come

¹³ The Table Builder function on the Australian Bureau of Statistics site was used to extract this information.

from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds; in 2011, those who identified as Buddhists came from over 79 different countries. Buddhists in Australia can further be divided along denominational lines. There are a number of different ways of categorising Buddhist practitioners, although most Buddhist scholars will recognise the existence of at least two main forms: Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. The Australian Bureau of Statistics data does not provide a breakdown of the percentage of people practicing different forms of Buddhism in Australia (as it does for Christian denominations). However, it is possible to extract data about the country of birth of Buddhist adherents. The following table lists the top 10 countries of birth of Buddhist practitioners in Australia in 2011:

Table 1: Country of birth of those identifying as Buddhists in Australia in 2011

Country	Percentage
Australia	30.11%
Vietnam	19.67%
China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)	9.74%
Thailand	6.32%
Sri Lanka	6.23%
Malaysia	5.55%
Cambodia	4.26%
Taiwan	1.90%
Japan	1.76%
Hong Kong (SAR of China)	1.46%
Other	13%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011

Sampling procedure

The sampling procedure thus attempted to reach participants primarily from a range of ethnic and denominational backgrounds represented in the table above. This was done through purposive and snowballing methods (Tranter, 2010: 138; Silverman, 2010: 141). Firstly, I sent information about the study to Buddhist friends, leaders and community figures in Victoria, including the Buddhist Council of Victoria (BCV), which serves as the peak body serving the needs of Buddhist communities in Victoria. The flyer was sent to subscribers of the BCV mailing list, some of whom forwarded the

flyer to people they knew. I also made posts on the Facebook pages of several university Buddhist groups in Victoria, which were shared by some members to the Facebook pages of other groups. Several university groups I contacted also emailed information about the study to their members via email. I attended an annual fundraising dinner for a Buddhist intrafaith event held in April, 2014, and left a flyer about the study on each table. Two participants were recruited during the night. Although the decision was made not to send information about the study to Buddhist practitioners in Sydney initially, as it was expected that an ample number of participants could be recruited in Victoria, information about the study reached a MITRA Youth Buddhist Network committee member via the dissemination of information about the study in Victoria. Subsequently, this person offered to make an announcement about the study during a conference break, and distribute flyers during the upcoming conference in May 2014, in the event that I could either travel to Sydney or was able to conduct interviews via Skype. As I was still looking for participants who were brought up as Buddhists, the decision was made to go ahead with this plan. An amended flyer (as discussed below) was sent to MITRA Youth Buddhist Network. However in the end, a sufficient number of participants were recruited in Victoria, and nobody in Sydney made contact with me regarding the study.

Of the potential participants who contacted me, several could not proceed with the interview for a number of reasons: not having practiced Buddhism for long enough (2 people), not being old enough (1 person), health reasons (1 person), and change of mind (1 person). Initially I also found that many of the people who contacted me were Buddhist 'converts', that is, people who were not raised as Buddhists by their parents and who discovered Buddhism via other means, such as through reading books, being introduced through friends, or via the practice of Buddhist meditation. Upon reviewing the study flyer, which called for young people who had had an 'active interest' in Buddhism for at least 5 years, I thought that perhaps these particular terms might exclude those who had been brought up as Buddhists by their families, and did not feel as though they had an 'active interest' in Buddhism, regardless of whether or not their commitment and practice of Buddhism had deepened over time.

An interview with one participant who had been brought up in a Vietnamese Buddhist family further consolidated my thinking in this regard. Although he had frequently attended a Vietnamese Buddhist temple from a young age and was actively involved in the community, during the interview he mentioned that he initially wasn't sure if the criteria applied to him, as he 'didn't know anything about Buddhism' until later in life. He explained:

I was unsure whether the criteria applied to me because, I'm not really sure when to consider, when I had an active, uh, interest in Buddhism...I grew up in a family of semi practicing Buddhists...with my grandmother practicing in a, in her own way...and my father volunteering his time at the [Lotus Temple]. But, and his practice comprising of meditation and reciting of sutras, but I didn't know anything about Buddhism, and I was never taught anything about Buddhism by them...but because of them, I had spent, um, significant cultural and religious events of my childhood at the temple, and so I considered myself a cultural Buddhist. Um, and it wasn't until much later when I was having difficulties in university, when um, I was doing an internship [in Singapore]...and I stayed with one of my dad's old friends, who is a practicing Buddhist, that I became interested in, uh, Buddhism as a living philosophy, or something to be practiced. And that would, that was three years ago.

This prompted me to develop and send out an amended flyer specifically inviting people who had been brought up as Buddhists to participate in the study, in order to obtain greater representation from this group. The amended flyer obtained ethical approval from MUHREC, and can be viewed in Appendix 3. I decided to target specific ethnic groups who were not yet represented in the study, including Chinese, Malaysian, Sri Lankan, Thai and Cambodian Buddhist groups. The decision to target these particular groups was because of their representation on the list of top ten countries of birth of Australian Buddhists born overseas.

Through my personal contacts, I was able to recruit an additional 4 participants from Chinese, Malaysian and Sri Lankan backgrounds. One participant claimed to have

practiced Buddhism for only three years, however the decision was made to include him, as he was in fact brought up as a Buddhist by his parents, and he was the only Sri Lankan participant to express an interest in the study. I did not have any contacts in the Thai and Cambodian Buddhist communities and was unable to recruit participants from these communities. In total, I interviewed 22 participants, with an even split between Buddhist ‘converts’ and those raised as Buddhists. There were 12 male and 10 female participants. The final ethnic make-up of participants, their gender and the form of Buddhism they practiced is listed in the table below, followed by participant profiles. The ethnicity and form of Buddhism practiced by participants was self-described and is listed below, with the exception of one participant (Winona), who mentioned she was more concerned with the ‘content’ and whether she could apply it to her life, rather than the ‘tradition’ it came from.

Table 2: Sample

Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Age	M/F	Form of Buddhism Practiced
Anh	Vietnamese	18	F	Vietnamese Pureland-Zen
Ben	European	22	M	Tibetan
Beth	Australian	26	F	Theravada
Bob	White-Australian	26	M	Zen
Candice	Caucasian	25	F	Zen/undecided
Ellen	Anglo/European Australian	28	F	Theravada
Evie	Caucasian	23	F	Zen/Tibetan
Fabian	Celtic	29	M	Triratna Indian Mahayana
Faye	Caucasian-Australian	23	F	Cambodian Theravada
Henry	Chinese-Australian	28	M	Theravada
Kieu	Vietnamese	29	F	Vietnamese Pureland-Zen
Maria	Australian-European	28	F	Non-sectarian
Neville	Vietnamese-Chinese	20	M	Vietnamese Pureland-Zen
Peter	Vietnamese-Australian	19	M	Vietnamese Pureland-Zen
Rupal	Sri Lankan	29	M	Theravada
Steven	Malaysian/Australian	23	M	Mahayana
Tenzin	Anglo	25	M	Tibetan Mahayana
Terry	Vietnamese-Australian	23	M	Mahayana
Victor	Vietnamese-Australian	25	M	Korean Seon Zen
Winona	Australian	27	F	Not concerned
Yen	Malaysian Chinese	20	F	Chinese Mahayana
Yoshi	Malaysian-Chinese	28	M	Chinese Mahayana

In Appendix 1, I provide a full set of participant profiles which begin the task of organising the data along the topics I identified at the outset of the thesis: religious socialisation, belonging and participation. These profiles convey participants' unique perspectives on living in Australia as young Buddhist practitioners. They enable readers to note common themes amongst participants, which include engagement with multiple localised, globalised, traditional and detraditionalised religious socialising influences; multiculturalism and positive perceptions about Buddhism as factors facilitating belonging; perceptions about Buddhism as an 'Asian' religion; a perceived conflict between Buddhism and Australian or Western culture and a struggle to reconcile both; experiences of anti-religious sentiment; a perception of political involvement as 'conflicting' with Buddhism; an application of Buddhist teachings particularly in belonging and participation; and perceptions of identity as processual. These themes will be further analysed and developed in the following data analysis chapters.

Conduct of the interview

Prior to each interview, I contacted participants via email or phone to ensure they met the interview criteria, and to organise a suitable location to conduct the interview. Participants were invited to nominate a quiet, yet public location, such as a library meeting room or a Buddhist temple. The only exception to this was the first pilot interview, which was conducted at my house with a friend, who nominated the location herself. All other interviews were conducted in either a library meeting room, a room in a Buddhist temple, a university postgraduate room, or an unused room in a university building. Where possible, meeting rooms were booked in advance (this was not necessary at the Buddhist temples, as I was informed that a suitable location would be found when I arrived). The interviews were conducted over a 6 week period from mid-March to mid-late May, 2014, in Victoria, Australia. Before each interview, participants were given an explanatory statement (Appendix 4) to read, which explained the study in more detail. Participants were asked if they were fine to proceed, and if they had any questions before starting. Participants were then asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 5). All documents were written in English, and the interviews were also conducted in English, which all participants spoke fluently.

Interviews ranged from 40 minutes to 100 minutes, and were recorded using a voice recorder. The first part of the interview asked participants to provide basic background information, such as age, ethnicity, years of Buddhist involvement, and so on. The remainder of the interview schedule covered topics relating to the key research questions, exploring religious identity negotiation, involvement with Buddhist groups, Buddhist activities, interactions with non-Buddhists, experiences of belonging and marginalisation in relation to Buddhism, perceptions of Australian citizenship, and civic and political participation. Participants were also given the opportunity to make additional comments at the end of the interview. Some participants also used this time to ask me about my own Buddhist practice or identification, which I happily clarified. I avoided giving participants information about my own Buddhist identification and practice before and during the conduct of the interview, as I wanted participants to focus on their own narratives rather than my own, or for them to position their narratives in relation to information about me. However it is not possible to determine which participants knew about my Buddhist identity or practice beforehand, as some might have come across my name due to my involvement in the Victorian Buddhist community.

During the interviews, I asked participants to describe in their own words which labels they used to describe their own ethnicity, and in some cases, to clarify how they perceived of the differences between ethnicity and nationality. In my study, this was useful particularly for White participants, who used a number of different adjectives to describe their ethnicity, including Caucasian (race), White-Australian (race and nationality), Anglo (linguistic) or Australian (nationality), indicating that perhaps the meaning of ethnicity was murky or contested amongst some young, White Australian Buddhist practitioners.

Although I brought a copy of the interview questions (Appendix 6) on sheets of paper to each of the interviews, I read through the questions before each interview and tried to memorise the order of the questions to avoid looking at the sheet throughout the interview, and to focus on listening to and responding to participants' narratives. When participants raised issues which I would otherwise have come to later in the

interview, I enabled them to speak about these issues, and followed up by asking other questions related to the issue. This was done to enable participants to construct their own narratives in relation to the research questions, and to avoid a structured interrogation of the participant by the interviewer. I also made notes throughout the interview, for example, if participants paused or expressed emotion. However I kept this to a minimum to avoid distracting the participant, and for the most part, added notes to my interviews while listening to the recording again afterwards. I also recorded notes after my initial phone conversations with participants (if applicable – some emailed), noting things such as whether participants were concerned about the location, as well as some brief notes about the duration of their practice, and anything else they raised (for example, if they expressed an interest in talking about a particular topic such as belonging).

The study was classified and approved as ‘low risk’, and as expected, none of the participants exhibited any signs of duress throughout the interviews. However one participant, when asked about her thoughts on being an Australian citizen became slightly teary and mentioned that she felt ‘very emotional’. I asked her whether she wanted to stop the interview, and mentioned that this was completely fine and up to her. She said that she wanted to continue, and explained that she felt guilty and uncomfortable about the treatment of Aborigines at the hands of White people, as she identified as White herself. The interview proceeded smoothly after that, however once the interview had finished, I again checked that she was okay (she said that she was, and thanked me for the opportunity to contribute her views). Before we parted ways, I thanked her (as I did all with participants) and I reminded her that she was welcome to access support services using contact details listed on the explanatory statement I had given her before commencing the interview.

Insider/outsider – implications for data collection and analysis

In addition to informing my research approach and foci, my positionality also influenced my recruitment of participants and conduct of interviews. While I can be considered a religious insider in many ways, I am currently not involved in any of the religious activities I described earlier. Additionally, as I have discussed, the Australian

Buddhist community is very diverse. This means that there are many young Australian Buddhist practitioners I have not met or developed a connection to, including within the Vietnamese Buddhist community, despite being Vietnamese myself. My involvement with young Buddhist practitioners has been limited: I have never been a member of any Vietnamese Buddhist youth groups, and I only became involved in a university Buddhist group in my twenties. I have not become immersed in certain lineages or traditions, such as Theravadan and Tibetan Buddhist communities, and consequently have no experiences relating to belonging, marginalisation or participation within such communities.

Consequently, although I was primarily a religious insider, I was also in some ways an outsider for the purposes of this study. This insider/outsider role which I loosely ascribe to is similar to the ‘participant-as-observer’ status that Junker and Gold (1958: 217) describe as part of their proposed continuum of roles with reference to insider and outsider perspectives¹⁴. Kim Knott (2009: 268) writes that it involves both a desire to fulfil ‘personal religious commitments’ and also to describe and explain the religious world to outsiders. In my own case, while I do not at this stage accept without doubt all Buddhists ‘beliefs’¹⁵, my aim is to provide as best I can a ‘Buddhist’ interpretation of my findings to readers may be unfamiliar with these teachings, and to acknowledge how I am positioned in relation to the phenomena I am researching. For some scholars, this is couched in terms of post-colonialism (Knott, 2009: 261), and involves considering issues of power, identity and status (Flood, 1999; King, 1999; Shaw, 1995). My own positioning as someone who was born in Australia with a Vietnamese ethnic background does not allow me to make any generalisations here with regard to the way I approach issues of racial and ethnic privilege, although it has

¹⁴ This continuum is represented as follows:

Outsider

Insider

Complete observer---Observer as participant---Participant as observer---Complete participant
(Gold, 1958: 217)

¹⁵ In any case, ‘belief’ is not the best term to use with regard to Buddhism – ‘beliefs’ and practices also vary across different Buddhist traditions

allowed me to experience dealing with ethnic and racial stereotyping, and consider how it might affect others. These are issues which I explore in the chapter on Belonging. Here I suggest that my own loose identification with 'insider' and 'outsider' roles is reflected in my study participants' experiences of belonging – as neither completely marginalised or accepted across different social contexts in Australia.

My role as a loosely defined 'participant-as-observer' had further advantages and disadvantages. Being an insider meant that it was relatively easy to spread information about the study and to recruit participants, as the networks already existed and were easily accessible. Having a broad understanding of the basic teachings of Buddhism helped me to develop a rapport with participants, and relate to their perceptions about Buddhist practice. This was not always the case however, and I still considered myself to be an outsider if participants were engaged in practices different to my own, had a more extensive knowledge and understanding about Buddhist philosophy, or were engaged in esoteric practices which are not freely shared with outsiders. I did not consider my ignorance about particular beliefs or practices to be a significant hindrance, as I was more interested in hearing about experiences of belonging, self perception and participation. Indeed, I found that a certain level of ignorance on my part meant that participants undertook the process of explaining things as they would to a novice, reducing the likelihood that I would misinterpret or make assumptions about their words in my own interpretation, given the fact that I was writing for a readership that would include those with no prior knowledge of Buddhism. Where possible, I have quoted participants directly and have additionally paraphrased their comments in my analysis of the data. I have also tried to describe the context of particular comments to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation. However having said this, I acknowledge that my analysis of participants' words is at best an interpretation of an interpretation, and cannot be considered entirely objective, as it is influenced by my own positioning as a Buddhist practitioner with limited knowledge and experiences relating to Buddhism, formed through my own socialisation and education to date.

Data analysis

Interviews were transcribed after data was collected. Although one of the interviews was conducted in a less than ideal location (a noisy café), all interviews were able to be transcribed without difficulty. Participants were allocated pseudonyms, and all identifying information was either changed or removed to prevent them from being identified by an outsider. I then undertook a thematic analysis of the data, which, as Bryman (2016: 584) notes, is primarily centered around the identification of themes which relate to the research focus, and provides the researcher with the basis for understanding and making a theoretical contribution to the relevant literature. Due to the richness of the narratives generated through a lived religion approach, I decided early on to manually analyse the data, rather than use computer assisted data analysis software. As Bustin (1997) and Fielding and Lee (1998: 74) argue, coding text and putting together related fragments risks decontextualising the data – a key concern amongst many qualitative researchers (Bryman, 2016: 603). This risk was particularly amplified given my usage of a lived religion approach, which aims to understand how religion is experienced within the context of individuals' lives. Indeed, I found that participants' specific comments about religious socialisation, belonging and participation often only made sense against the backdrop of larger stories they told about their religious lives, and many times, I found myself looking back over the transcripts to ascertain the context within which particular statements were made. I thus made the decision to organise the quotes into themes which enabled me to flesh out key points related to my three research questions, and to include contextual data where required to situate participants' words within the broader stories they told.

At the suggestion of my supervisors, I undertook a preliminary data analysis once 6 interviews had been conducted. This enabled me to identify some possible themes in relation to the literatures on religious belonging and exclusion, issues of race and ethnicity and national belonging with regard to religion, global flows of Buddhism, and the negotiation of religious identity as inflected by Buddhist teachings. The initial themes I identified included:

- Not feeling comfortable talking about religion to others
- A tendency to talk about practice rather than identity

- A perceived link between Buddhism and Asia
- A perceived disinterest or antagonism between religion and Australian culture
- A perceived clash between Buddhism and certain professions

As Bazeley (2013) argues, it is important to explicate the implications of any themes identified, and in this regard, my identification of these initial themes served as a catalyst for asking more detailed questions about each of these themes in further interviews, such as why and with who participants did not feel comfortable talking about religion; whether participants perceived any link between Buddhism and the notion of 'practice', or other ways of talking about the self in relation to religiosity; and the practical or lived consequences of Buddhism being perceived as an 'Asian' religion.

As more interviews were conducted and transcribed, additional themes were identified. Ryan and Bernard (2003) recommend looking specifically for: repetitions; indigenous typologies or categories; metaphors and analogies; transitions; similarities and differences; linguistic connectors; missing data; and theory-related material. Many of these strategies were useful, such as *repetitions* of topics that recurred again and again in interviews with different participants. These included: Buddhism having a positive image in Australia; mentions of multiculturalism and the Dalai Lama as facilitating religious belonging; the contestation of the concept of 'identity'; the role of overseas travel and/or engagement with different cultures and forms of Buddhism; and the perceived importance of helping others. *Indigenous typologies or categories*, or local expressions which may be unfamiliar, were also useful for giving me a greater appreciation of the diversity of Buddhist practice amongst participants, and showing me how Buddhism was relevant to individuals within the unique circumstances of their lives – crucial to a lived approach to understanding religiosity. Similarly, participants' use of religious *metaphors and analogies*, such as the use of the textually-derived expression, 'sinking in the mud' to describe one's inability to help oneself, revealed the continuing relevance of traditional and institutional antecedents to religiosity. I also took note of *linguistic connectors* such as 'because' and 'since' as they were used by participants, and the way these terms indicated causal connections in the minds of participants – this enabled me to consider connections I hadn't

considered before, such as the perceived link between multiculturalism and the suppression of religiosity. My identification of such connections enabled me form further links to specific literatures – a factor also identified by Bazeley (2013) as integral to an effective thematic analysis of research data. More broadly, my three main research questions generated much *theory-related material* in relation to Buddhist socialisation, belonging and participation, which assisted in the organisation of my data in the latter stages of writing up.

Although my three main research questions related to socialisation, belonging and participation, it should be noted that due to the elusive or unfixed nature of identity, quotes relating to identity also appear in the chapter on participation. Further literature reviews were then conducted relating to the three main themes, which helped me interpret any specificities or unexpected findings which emerged from my field research. In the next three chapters, I present the key findings and my analysis of the data.

Chapter 5: Re-thinking Ethno-Religious Socialisation

This first data analysis chapter discusses findings regarding the religious socialisation of participants in my study. In keeping with a lived religion approach outlined in earlier chapters, I discuss the significance of alternate religious socialising influences which have arisen due to the globalisation and detraditionalisation of Buddhism without neglecting the continuing influence of parents and religious institutions on religious socialisation. Crucially, I focus on the role of young Australian Buddhist practitioners themselves in negotiating a diverse range of religious socialising influences with reference to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2002: 25-6) observation that in a detraditionalised era, traditions, if they still play a role, 'must be chosen and invented', having significance 'only through the decisions and experience of individuals'. I contend that this distinction should be heeded to understand the lives of young Buddhist practitioners for whom an ethno-religious socialisation approach is particularly racialising, and perpetuates essentialist views about 'Asian' Buddhist practitioners as passive recipients of religious tradition from their parents.

This chapter shows that participants from this study negotiated their religious identities in ways which showed a recognition of multiple Buddhist socialising influences both within and beyond families and religious institutions, which included global flows and mobilities, material culture, related fields of knowledge, and diffuse social networks. As discussed in the Introduction, the emergence of these alternative religious socialising influences can be traced to the development of globalised and detraditionalised forms of Buddhism in the West, as well as changes to Australia's social, cultural and political environment which have increased the number of sites from which young people can learn about Buddhism and receive spiritual guidance.

Furthermore, this chapter shows that the emergence of multiple Buddhist socialising influences contributes to the unpredictability of Buddhist socialisation at the same time that it offers increased opportunities to learn about Buddhism. It shows that young Australian Buddhist practitioners are required to negotiate Buddhist identity

amidst other competing life priorities, such as education and employment, and that engagement with Buddhism waxes and wanes over time. The findings are discussed in relation to Beck & Beck-Gernsheim's (2002) theory of individualisation, which emphasises the individual management of unpredictability of life trajectories, and Elias's (1978) ideas about the processualism and the link between individual and social development.

This chapter is divided into three sections. First, I discuss data which reveals continuities with previous research, namely, the significance of socialising influences such as parents and temples, and the unidirectional transmission of Buddhism at ethno-religious sites to young Buddhist practitioners. I also discuss how families and temples/religious centres strongly influence the Buddhist identity negotiations of those not raised in an ethno-religious environment, challenging the notion that intergenerational religious socialisation occurs exclusively within ethnically homogenous communities. I then discuss how those brought up as Buddhists differ from their parents in styles of practice, and also how participants influence others', including their parents', religiosity. I note the efforts made by participants to construct their own religious biographies and pathways, demonstrating divergence from the standard ethno-religious 'package' presented by parents and temples. Next, I analyse the influence of global flows and mobilities connecting participants with Buddhist socialising influences beyond Australia, material culture such as books, technology and websites, related fields of knowledge such as psychology and martial arts, and fluid and diffuse networks on Buddhist youth identity negotiation. I note how participants' navigation of these religious socialising influences engenders the development of contextually dependent attitudes and religious identifications befitting the circumstances. I conclude with a discussion of how these findings can be theorised using the work of Beck & Beck-Gernsheim and Elias.

Continuities

Parental and temple influence amongst those raised as Buddhists

Consistent with previous studies of minority youth religious identity, there was evidence of parental and temple influence on Buddhist youth identity formation for

participants who were raised in Buddhist families. Parents played a key role in socialising children into Buddhist identity and commitment, transporting participants to and from the temple during childhood (Andrew, Anh, Kieu, Terry, Victor, Yen, Yoshi), involving participants in Buddhist youth groups and temple activities (Andrew, Peter, Terry, Steven, Yen, Yoshi), and acting as role models for religious practice (Anh, Kieu, Yen, Yoshi). Parents also taught or took children to language classes, aiding their understanding of Buddhist texts and their integration into ethnic Buddhist communities (Anh, Terry, Kieu, Neville). As Anh relates, 'I know the fact that my mum have[sic] always taken me to Viet school, Vietnamese school, I kinda find that really helpful, because I find reading sutra in Vietnamese so much better than in English.' Additionally, proficiency in their native language allowed participants to have conversations with their parents about religion, facilitating understandings of Buddhism across generations. Anh, Kieu, Yen and Yoshi for example all enjoyed talking with their mothers about Buddhism.

Many participants who were brought up as Buddhists claimed that one or both of their parents had influenced them most in their learning about Buddhism. Even if participants did also draw from other influences to deepen their understanding of Buddhism, parents were often seen to provide the foundation for further explorations of Buddhism. For example, Yoshi said of his mother: 'She's...probably one of the main pillars in my life...as well as...the monks and nuns and disciples of this temple'. Yoshi likened his mother's teachings of Buddhism as a 'textbook', which he supplemented with his own exploration through books and other resources. Many participants brought up as Buddhists said that if it was not for their parents' influence when they were young, they probably would not have spent so much time at the temple or learnt about Buddhism (Peter, Tenzin, Terry, Steven, Yen). Yen, for example, says:

eventually I developed my own interest from that, so if it wasn't for her I don't think I would have, maybe, maybe further down the line, but...you know, at this point in life where I'm at, like in my, in terms of my cultivation, then I'll feel, 'Ah, I have to thank my mum'.

These findings resonate with an ethno-religious socialisation approach, which emphasises the uni-directional transmission of religion from one generation to the next within ethnically homogenous communities, and with Hervieu-Léger's (2000) description of religion as a 'chain of memory' which connects members of a community, both past and present. In addition to parents, Buddhist temples and centres were also seen as important places for learning about Buddhism and developing in a community of supportive and like-minded people. Buddhist temples and centres provided an environment unlike any other for participants to connect with other Buddhist practitioners (Victor, Ellen, Maria), pick up the attitudes and behaviours of role models (Steven, Fabian, Yen), learn new skills (Steven, Terry), and take on roles and responsibilities to further their 'cultivation' (Yen, Yoshi). Anh described the temple as a 'second home', saying she felt something was missing when she didn't go. Victor described his Buddhist community as the place where he felt like he most belonged, saying it was a place 'built on a completely different framework' in which knowledge was shared freely, unlike his experience in 'the practical, secular world', where knowledge and experience were 'hoarded' and 'scarce'. For Steven, his local Buddhist temple was a place where he was given opportunities to grow by being placed in positions of responsibility, and provided with opportunities to help others. He also believes the more challenging aspects of being part of a religious community have aided his practice of Buddhism, reflecting, 'I like the atmosphere here, it's really peaceful, and tranquil, on the outside. But once you start going to like the inside and knowing the people and stuff, it can get really manic sometimes. But, I guess that's what develops your character.' For many participants who were raised as Buddhists, parents and temples worked in tandem to socialise them into a foundational framework of morals, practices and values which could be drawn upon to deepen their understanding of Buddhism.

Buddhist temples also played a role in preserving ethnic culture amongst young participants raised as Buddhists. Kieu for example mentioned that all of the activities and services at her temple were conducted in Vietnamese, and that most of the fundraising activities at her temple were relief efforts for Vietnam-related events. Terry claimed that the Vietnamese Buddhist temple he attended was 'the only place

that I have a strong bond with the Vietnamese community', and that his involvement at the temple gave him opportunities to connect with Vietnamese people, communicate in Vietnamese and celebrate Vietnamese festivities. These findings resonate with the findings of Australian studies conducted since the 1980s which emphasise the role of Buddhist temples in facilitating religious and ethnic identity maintenance across generations, and helping ethnic minorities establish and maintain a sense of belonging (Adam, 1995; Bouma, 1996; Cox, 1982; Vasi, 2011).

Consistent with Vasi's (2011) finding that Cambodian Buddhist temples in Victoria remain relevant to older and younger generations, there is much support for the idea that parents and temples continue to play a key role in socialising children into a Buddhist identity in ethno-religious communities. However this did not mean that only participants brought up as Buddhists experienced parents and Buddhist temples as socialising influences, and that socialisation into a Buddhist identity only occurred within ethnically homogenous communities. It also did not mean that Buddhist socialisation involved only parental and temple influence. The next section discusses the socialising role of parents and temples for participants not brought as Buddhists. I then discuss the role of alternate religious socialising influences beyond parents and religious institutions.

Parental and temple influence amongst those not raised as Buddhists

An unexpected finding of the study was that the parents of some Western convert Buddhist practitioners had an influence on their religious socialisation, despite not identifying as Buddhists themselves. For example, Ellen, who described herself as an 'Anglo Australian', recalled receiving a book about the Dalai Lama from her agnostic mother, piquing her interest in Buddhism when she was a teenager. Bob, who described himself as a 'White Australian', also became aware of Buddhism only when his mother bought him a book called 'The Buddha'. Additionally, Bob's mother bought him a Buddha statue when he started becoming more interested in the religion, and attended Kendo classes with him where he learnt more about Buddhist philosophy. Bob noted that despite her 'atheistic tendencies', his mother was interested in religion

and philosophy, and tried to foster this in her children; she also supported Bob's brother in his graduate studies of Catholic theology.

Similarly, Evie related that her mother, who at one stage considered becoming a Catholic nun, tried to instil in Evie an interest in critical thinking regarding different spiritual ideas and practices from a young age. This had an effect on the way Evie approached Buddhism initially, through secular mindfulness meditation and scientific and philosophical perspectives on mindfulness, rather than through reading Buddhist texts or becoming involved in a Buddhist group. It was only after her explorations of Buddhism through secular, scientific and philosophical avenues that Evie gained enough 'faith' to investigate Buddhism more thoroughly by reading and attending talks, teachings and retreats.

Parents thus had a role in exposing children to Buddhist ideas even if they weren't Buddhist themselves, by choosing Buddhism as a religion to present to children, providing resources about Buddhism, and engaging in conversations which influenced the way children engaged with Buddhism. The support provided by the parents in this category differed from that provided by parents drawing from an ethno-religious background, coming from a broad framework of those who could at most be described as 'Buddhist sympathisers', a term used by Tweed to denote 'those who have some sympathy for a religion but do not embrace it exclusively or fully', and do not identify as Buddhists (Tweed, 2002: 20). Thus, these 'Buddhist sympathisers' would not have access to the same linguistic and cultural resources, or form part of a religious communities whose members work with one another to preserve a shared ethno-religious heritage.

Supporting children's explorations of Buddhism under such circumstances would require extra effort or initiative, and it is not surprising that some parents did not play such a facilitative role in their children's explorations of Buddhism. Indeed, some parents expressed reservations about their children's involvement in Buddhism, with Bob's father for example initially expressing concern about the fact that Bob was exploring 'non-Christian' ways of dealing with the death of his grandfather. Faye, too,

noted that her parents influence on her development as a Buddhist was not particularly supportive, relating an incident where a Buddhist teacher visited from overseas. As Faye recalls:

...one of the teachers visited from Cambodia, and...my brother asked him if he could be a monk with this teacher...and...he was encouraging my brother to study, 'cause he doesn't have a degree...so he doesn't have a...profession. And um, my mum actually said to that teacher, 'Oh can you just take him now?' And then my dad agreed, he was like, 'Yeah yeah, just take him with you, like you can just take our son anytime you want'...Then the teacher turned to me...turned to me and he looks at my mum and he's like, 'What about her?' like he points at me. Like, 'Could she be a nun?' And my mum's just like, 'No' [laughs]. Yeah...I don't think she said 'Not yet'...And I think that's like the second time something like that has happened to our, so that kind of hangs in the back of my head I guess, that if I ever wanted to take my faith to the point of actually ordaining as a nun living in a monastery, if I did that like tomorrow I wouldn't have my parents' acceptance. And that's actually against like the rules of the Buddha. Is in the ceremony, in the questioning in the ceremony, is like, are you in debt, are you running from the law, are you this are you that, do you have your parents' permission to enter into the robes. So...yeah, that's kind of sad. It's really sad for me, 'cause it's kind of like, I know that they appear to be really accepting, um, but at the end of the day if like I wanted to just suddenly be a nun tomorrow, they wouldn't accept that, so that's really hard.

In Faye's case, her parents had a strong influence on her engagement with Buddhism, effectively acted as gatekeepers into the Buddhist *saṅgha*¹⁶ despite not being Buddhist practitioners themselves. It is worthwhile noting that a number of push-pull factors were operating in this incident; Faye's parents were happy for her brother to

¹⁶ Also '*saṃgha*' in Sanskrit. It refers to the Buddhist community, in particular, those ordained as monks and nuns (Keown, 2003: 247).

become a monk, but the Buddhist teacher was advising against it as her brother did not have a profession, and therefore had nothing to fall back on if his foray into monkhood was unsuccessful. However Faye's parents were not willing to let Faye become a nun, despite the teacher's suggestion that she become one, and the fact that she did have a career. This example demonstrates the ways families and religious authorities may still work in tandem to facilitate or restrict the religious involvement of young Australian Buddhist practitioners even for those not brought up as Buddhists.

However, religious influence did not just flow one way. Some participants, in responding to their parents' perceptions to their religiosity, developed pro-active measures which in turn had the capacity to shape their parents' religiosity. Maria, for example, took a range of measures to ensure her parents did not find out the extent of her involvement in Buddhism, despite the fact that her parents 'were actually really accepting right from day one'. As she relates, 'I didn't tell them that I moved to Melbourne to hang out at a Buddhist temple, I didn't want to scare them [laughs]'. When asked how she thought her parents would have reacted if they had known her reason for moving, Maria replied:

I think that my mum would, they would have accepted it, because they're loving, but...they probably would've talked behind my back, like, what is she doing, why isn't she going out getting a boyfriend and staying with us and having kids.

In addition to moving interstate, Maria also went to great lengths to hide Buddhist-related paraphernalia in her house whenever her parents came to visit. As she reveals:

I just recently, what I call, parent-proofed my house [laughs], yesterday, which means I went around and I removed a lot of the Buddha images and stuff from my house. Because I didn't want...I don't want them to feel uncomfortable. Because they're not Buddhist. Even though I'm sure that they would be very accepting, I don't want them to feel, uncomfortable, you know what I mean?

She added:

I mean, I want them to be comfortable in the house and not be looking at, I mean I don't know, my mum's accepting that I'm Buddhist and so is my dad, but I don't know what sort of reactions my mum has, like if I have a beautiful *Quan Yin*¹⁷ image. And I took that off the wall, put it in my cupboard. Because my mum's a Catholic, she believes in Mary. And Mary, and obviously they're both sort of um, similar, 'cause they're both like a mother in a particular religion. But my mum's Catholic, I don't want her to be looking uh, to look at it and to think in her mind that she doesn't like it because it's not Mary. So I took it down...like even my altar, I have an altar in my bedroom, and I just recently took off all of these [Buddhist images] and I put them all in my drawer. 'Cause I don't want them to think, What is this? What is, what are all these weird things, you know? And now I just have a Buddha image and some candles. And I have my cushion there, 'cause they're okay with me meditating and doing a bit of chanting, I think. But yeah I mean, I don't want them, yeah. But even, I guess it's just being, it's also being uh, culturally acceptable. But yeah I don't tell my parents, uh, I chant every morning and night, because I do [laughs]. But I'm not gonna tell them that. They might think it's weird. And I don't want them to think that it's weird. And to them it probably is weird. You know what I mean? To most people it'd be weird.

Maria further explained that she didn't want her parents to ever think negatively about her Buddhist practices, as this might create 'the causes for that to sort of happen to them, or maybe to not be a Buddhist one day, in a future life'.

A number of points can be made about Maria's actions here. Firstly, Maria's decision to move interstate and hide all Buddhist related paraphernalia during her parents' visits demonstrates the extent to which parents' perceptions about religion may influence the religious lives of young Buddhist practitioners, despite not intentionally

¹⁷ Bodhisattva of compassion. One of the most popular deities of devotion and reverence in east Asian Buddhism. Also known as 'Kuan-yin', or 'Avalokiteśvara' (Keown, 2003: 148).

socialising their children into a Buddhist identity. However, her willingness and capacity to shape her own religious biography, and her concern about their future lives as Buddhist practitioners positions her as a potential religious socialising agent, rather than simply the recipient of socialising influences. This demonstrates the bi-directionality of Buddhist flows between young Buddhist practitioners and their parents. Thus, while parents and Buddhist temples/centres often had a significant impact on the religious socialisation of young Buddhist practitioners, young Buddhist practitioners themselves showed a capacity to reconfigure their own religious biographies, as well as that of their parents'. It is useful now to explore in more detail young Buddhist practitioners' attempts to actively negotiate their religious identities, and the ways they sometimes influenced their parents' religiosity in doing so.

Changes

Intergenerational differences

The first example of bi-directional religious influence I discuss is that between participants who were raised as Asian Buddhists and their parents. In many cases, those raised as Buddhists within Asian families were not always satisfied with the ethno-cultural package presented to them, and many developed religious pathways differing from that of their parents. While young Buddhist practitioners provided evidence of continuities in parental and temple socialisation, there was also evidence of deviation from the ethno-cultural package presented to them. For example, Anh, a second-generation Vietnamese Buddhist, recalled how her mother was instrumental in bringing her to the temple from a young age, and how she developed her morals, values and identity through her interactions at the temple. However, Anh's experience was not consistent with established narratives on the transmission of religiosity in ethnic Buddhist communities, as she also reported practicing a form of Buddhism that was different to her mother's. She relates:

...there's a difference. Because I take Buddhism as a teaching, so I use that in my daily life, I refer to it, I think about it. My mum, she practice [sic] it with more in depth, so she actually um, chants and recite the Buddha name everything, and she...believes more than I do? Like, I don't know how she does

that [laughs], like, she takes it more serious than I do. So, she takes it as an actual religion, while I take it as a teaching.

These findings challenge the idea that 'modernist' Buddhism is a uniquely Western phenomenon (Coleman, 2002), and that Buddhist practitioners can be understood simply on the basis of their ethnic background.

There was also evidence to challenge the uni-directional flow of religion from one generation to another, with Anh choosing to go to the temple by herself, or attempting to bring her mother along.

Usually I'll ask my mum to go to the temple, so I kinda drag her into it (laughs). But...at this age, I can go by myself now, since I know how to take public transport, I know where it is and everything, so I would go here by myself, and a few years ago, I did go on a retreat to Sydney, and that was just a three weeks retreat...staying at a temple and, and yeah, it was, I can actually be independent (smiles).

Anh's experience reveals how second generation Australians raised in Buddhist families are not always the 'recipients' of religious culture, and in some cases act as influential agents shaping their parents' religiosity, with Anh in this case 'dragging' her mother with her to the temple.

For participants who were not raised within Asian Buddhist families, such as Beth, there was also evidence of an interweaving of stories across generations, providing a counterpoint for the development of religious identities. Beth converted to Buddhism after hearing a Buddhist talk and spending several months living in a Buddhist monastery in Sri Lanka. She reveals how her mother made a strong impact on her religiosity by travelling to Sri Lanka when she was staying in the monastery, which in turn led to her reconsidering her involvement.

I guess we both changed a bit...I think in terms of what caused that shift was...when my mum became a bit more accepting of the whole thing, for some reason I become more accepting of her perspective. So she actually came to visit the monastery and Sri Lanka...and somehow, like yeah, when she was in Sri Lanka with me, I was seeing it even through her eyes and thinking, I think it's really cool but it is quite simplistic in some ways, and...in some ways, it's not as advanced...it's not very intellectual. So I'd see more of the limitations, or I'd see it more through her eyes...so that, for some reason having her there...helped to cause a bit of a shift.

As this example demonstrates, a uni-directional flow of religiosity from one generation to another in ethnically homogenous Buddhist communities does not always occur, and that there is evidence of multi-directionality as well as a juxtaposition of narratives between one generation and the next. These findings are consistent with Hopkins et al.'s (2010: 316) finding that children can be understood as both 'social becomings' and 'competent agents' at the same time with regard to religious socialisation. They are also corroborated by Loundon's (2001: 201) work, which has found that 'young people have also been a conduit of dharma back to their parents', with some parents becoming 'interested in learning more about Buddhism because of their children'. Loundon (2001: 201) contends that the existence of these generational flows should caution us against thinking that there is a significant generation gap.

Although the influence of traditional socialising influences such as the temple and family was found to be significant and continuing, participants in this study who were raised as Buddhists were also found to engage with Buddhism in non-traditional ways, such as reading Buddhist texts written in English, and de-emphasising ethno-cultural rituals. Many participants who were not brought up as Buddhists were also found to subvert scholarly descriptions of 'convert' Buddhists as uninterested in the cultural aspects of Buddhism by making active attempts to educate themselves in this area. This finding resonates with Smith et al.'s (2016: 4) contention, that approaches to Buddhist identity need to move beyond an ethnic versus convert 'two-Buddhisms' model, and acknowledge the diversity with both 'Asian Buddhism' and 'the West'.

While it is important to acknowledge cultural precedents and the effect this may have on the lived realities of young Buddhist practitioners from Asian backgrounds, such as discrimination based on ethnicity or race, these cultural precedents may have little to do with the religious preferences of young Buddhist practitioners, and the way they attempt to construct identities and engage with communities aligning with their beliefs.

Thus, consistent with Martel-Reny and Beyer's (2013: 220) finding that most of the 'ethno-cultural' participants in their study of young adult Buddhists constructed forms of Buddhism which were based on their own research, inclinations and experiences, and Beyer's (2013: 11) finding that young people see themselves as 'individually responsible for and capable of building their own, personal relation to religion', participants in my study were not merely the recipients of socialising influences. They were also active meaning-makers who sought out, critiqued and experimented with a range of religious sources. These findings demonstrate the limitations of ethno-religious models of religious socialisation amongst young Australian Buddhist practitioners today, challenging both the uni-directionality of flows and the confinement of Buddhist socialisation to ethno-religious sites.

Multiple sites of influence

Having discussed religious flows between young Buddhist practitioners and their parents and observing the multi-directionality of Buddhist socialisation, I now examine young Australian Buddhist practitioners' engagement with other Buddhist socialising factors, including global information flows and mobilities, material culture, related fields of knowledge, and fluid and diffuse networks. As discussed in the Introduction, globalisation has intensified the spread of Buddhism to a range of sites, discourses and contexts, enabling young Australians to access Buddhism through a variety of means. As the following sections reveal, these other influences also had a significant influence on the religious identities of participants, highlighting the difficulty of restricting religious socialisation to ethno-religious sites. The following sections also reveal the personal effort required to navigate multiple Buddhist socialising influences.

Global flows and mobilities

For many participants, socialisation into a Buddhist identity in Australia was facilitated by physical encounters by visiting monks, or opportunities to travel overseas. Beth, for example, explained that she initially became interested in Buddhism following an encounter with a visiting monk, who she then stayed with in Sri Lanka.

I've been interested in Buddhism ever since I was a teenager, I met a Sri Lankan Buddhist monk, he happened to run a meditation class at my parent's house, and I was really struck by his sense of calm and presence, and it was like something I'd never really seen before. And so I uh was quite drawn to that, and spoke to, asked a couple of questions um, and then saw him a couple of times when he was living in Melbourne. Um but wasn't really that into it, interested, because I had school at the time and it just wasn't a priority. Then he moved back to Sri Lanka, and after I finished my undergrad, which was in Economics and Politics, I then went to spend a month at his monastery in Sri Lanka. So it was like a Forest Monastery up in the hills, near Kandy. And I think that that experience really solidified my interest in Buddhism, and mainly the practice of Buddhism as opposed to the beliefs or um, ideas around it, I was more interested in the meditation practice. So yeah, I sort of learnt a bit through that, lots of long days, meditating for like you know, 16 hours, absolute maximum, or less...

For Beth, her experience in Sri Lanka left a lasting impact as she learnt how to meditate and practice as a Buddhist, and tried to integrate this into her life in Australia when she returned. Victor too, who was raised in a Vietnamese Buddhist family, related that an encounter of Buddhism while studying in Burma left a lasting impact on him, much more so than his family upbringing. As he explained:

I grew up in a family of...semi practicing Buddhists...with my grandmother practicing...in her own way...and my father volunteering his time at the temple...and his practice comprising of meditation and reciting of sutras. But I didn't know anything about Buddhism, and I was never taught anything about

Buddhism by them...it wasn't until much later when...I was doing an internship...in Burma...and I stayed with one of my dad old friends, who is a practicing Buddhist, that I became interested in...Buddhism as a living philosophy, or something to be practiced.

As Victor explained, he then spent over a year reading every book on Buddhism at his university library, finally settling upon Korean Zen practice. Faye, too, related that her experience of living in a Buddhist monastery in Cambodia solidified her interest in Buddhism. Ben and Tenzin both said that they often travelled overseas to visit Buddhist teachers and receive guidance. Ben also used the Internet to keep in touch with his Buddhist teachers from overseas, describing this as a means to receive continual support and guidance for his practice.

For Fabian, his exploration of Buddhism took him to two different countries, where he spent several months in each country immersed in Buddhist communities. The effects of globalisation are illustrated dramatically here, as Fabian initially became interested in Buddhism after attending a Buddhist centre which aims to facilitate practice in a Western cultural context. He then became interested in Zen Buddhism after becoming involved in a group in Asia practicing in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh, an exiled Vietnamese monk. Several years later, he went to Europe for four months to live in a Buddhist community practicing in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh. These examples demonstrate the role of global flows in shaping Buddhist identity and practice, long past the initial settlement of ethnic Buddhist communities in Australia. These findings resonate with McMahan's (2008; 2012) contention, that globalisation has disembedded Buddhism from 'traditional social networks', spreading Buddhism to a diverse range of contexts which can now be accessed via a range of mediums, both locally and globally.

Material culture

While participants' Buddhist socialisation was facilitated by international travel and communication, they also had access to a wide variety of Buddhist resources, often in the form of books, or accessible via technology. Bob first came into contact with

Buddhism by reading a book about the Buddha given to him by his mother. Ellen also mentioned that she first learnt about Buddhism through reading a book about Buddhism and watching a documentary about Buddhism on television. For Henry, digital media was his main source of information about Buddhism – he subscribed to email newsletters from various Buddhist groups, as well as the Facebook pages of Buddhist groups and well-known Buddhist figures, which he checked and read frequently.

For some participants, reading books or searching for information about Buddhism on the Internet was a way to broaden their understanding of Buddhism, in ways which also shaped their identities as Buddhists. As Terry explained:

...when I was in year 8, year 9, I had a, I borrowed a big religion book...that was talking about religion, and Buddhism was the one that uh struck me the most because of my, because I'm Buddhist so I just had to look through that, and also...from that I was able to research...to see...various information on the Bodhisattvas, about the...Maitreya...Buddha who was said to be the next Buddha after...Shakyamuni...and also I've been looking through Wikipedia, through um, Access to Insight, which has a collection of Theravada um, Theravada sutras, so um yes, it was through my own extensive research. But I don't know why it motivated me to...do that, I think it's just cause I just want to learn more. Uh through spiritual, uh more about my own identity as a Buddhist, and learn more about um how Buddhism has evolved from 2500 years ago to now.

In this instance, Terry decided to read more about Buddhism to discover more about his identity as a Buddhist, seeking out means which were easily accessible to him – websites and library books. Although reading about Buddhism was also accompanied by engagement with Buddhist communities and a commitment to practice, material culture such as books and digital resources had an integral role to play in the socialisation of many participants by providing participants with an alternative, readily accessible source of information about Buddhism. These findings are consistent with

Mitchell & Quli's (2015: viii) observation that Buddhist ideas and practices have increasingly appeared in 'advertising and popular culture or in psychotherapeutic contexts', which are accessible to ever-diverse audiences. It is not surprising, then, that the young Buddhist practitioners in my study had access to, and drew upon these alternate depictions of Buddhism via their engagement with material culture.

Related fields of knowledge

As Buddhist ideas can now be found in a diverse range of sites, from Buddhist scriptures to television shows, artwork and contemporary music, perhaps unsurprisingly, several participants reported an engagement with Buddhism in relation to other fields, such as psychology, martial arts and Asian studies. This engagement was often experienced as an alternative to engaging with Buddhism in an ethno-cultural sense, and had the capacity to exert a significant effect on the negotiation of participants' Buddhist identities.

Mindfulness and its application in the mental health field is one example of a related field which draws directly from Buddhist teachings, yet tends to remove all references to Buddhism when applied to secular contexts. Despite this, as Stephen Batchelor (2012) notes, the origins of mindfulness can be easily ascertained through a quick Google search. Many Australian universities and workplaces offer secular mindfulness meditation classes aimed to relieve stress and improve productivity. The University of Sydney and The University of Melbourne for example both offer an online mindfulness training programs for students as part of their Counselling and Psychological Services (The University of Sydney, 2017; The University of Melbourne, 2014). In addition to online mindfulness meditation resource and free drop-in sessions, Monash University has also partnered with FutureLearn to offers a free Massive Online Open Course (MOOC), 'Mindfulness for Wellbeing and Peak Performance', which has recently been rated one of the top 50 MOOCs of all time (Monash University, 2017).

In addition, participants told of engaging with Buddhism through the study and practice of psychology. Given that Buddhism has had 'a significant impact on the delivery of mental health services in Australia' (Sherwood, 2003: 71) over the past

three decades, it is not surprising that five study participants considered psychology to be somewhat congruous to Buddhist practice. Rupal noted that although he was brought up in a Sri Lankan Buddhist family, he preferred engaging with the psychological aspects of Buddhism, which he described as making Buddhism beneficial to his life rather than focusing on the truthfulness of concepts such as reincarnation, karma, and Buddhist explanations about the universe. Beth, a clinical psychologist, related that Buddhism was a way for her to reconcile Buddhism with her culture as an Australian. Similarly Evie, a psychology student, revealed that after a long struggle with Buddhist-inspired ideals and Western ideas of materialism and success, she finally came to the resolution of studying to become a psychologist. For Tenzin, clinical psychology offered a way to incorporate his Buddhist aims into a career path. As he relates:

...what I want to do as a career after I get back from overseas, I want to go back to uni and um, become a clinical psychologist, which is very much in line with...Buddhism, working with people's minds and stuff like that.

While such initiatives are regarded by some scholars and Buddhist practitioners simply as an 'appropriation' of Buddhist practices into the mental health field (Nelson, 2009), it is likely that such activities offer an opportunity for young Australians to reconcile Buddhist commitment with career aspirations – clearly a priority for young adults in Australia.

Negotiating fluid and diffuse social networks

Up to this point, socialisation into a Buddhist identity has been discussed with reference to key sites or influences, such as global flows and mobilities, material culture and related fields of knowledge. While the significance of these socialising influences should be acknowledged, they cannot be considered a stable base from which participants constructed their religious identities. As a number of participants indicated, having to piece together multiple socialising influences required considerable individual responsibility and effort, and was further complicated by participants' own changing interests, needs and life circumstances.

Evie's journey into Buddhism is an illuminating example of the challenges of navigating multiple Buddhist socialising influences. Having first encountered Buddhism through secular mindfulness meditation, she then joined a university Buddhist group and began exploring Buddhism through perspectives on non-duality, neuroscience, physics and a number of philosophical perspectives. After gaining the 'faith' to investigate Buddhism more thoroughly, she then started attending a number of Buddhist centres, including Chinese, Tibetan, Korean and Sri Lankan Buddhist groups. She noted that during this period of experimentation she received 'sporadic' support from various monks, nuns and Buddhist scholars. At the time of interviewing Evie was keen on developing her practice along a Tibetan tradition, however she noted that her current sources of support for religious practice were her interfaith and spiritual friends, as well as some members of a B'ahai group. Evie acknowledged that she has quite a few sources of support, but also felt they were too disparate for the type of religious path she wanted to follow. As she says:

I feel like I've got lots of support but I have to kind of fragment or separate who I talk about what to. And I guess that's kind of okay, but I guess ideal support for me would be to find um someone who's more spiritually evolved than me but who has the same beliefs and approach or has found a path that I wanna follow exactly that path, and so I could just talk to that one person about everything.

As this example shows, participants were not necessarily lacking in the amount of support they had access to, however it was another matter to find or develop a support network which met their needs. For many participants, having face-to-face interaction was considered important for development as a Buddhist, which was difficult particularly if one lived far away from the temple or centre they liked, and additionally did not own a car. Bob and Henry related that they would like to go to a temple or Buddhist group more but they lived too far away, while Ellen noted that the particular Buddhist group she liked took over an hour to reach by public transport.

Participants themselves were also apt to move in and out of Buddhist environments in response to changing needs, interests and life circumstances. For ten of the participants (Ellen, Bob, Evie, Faye, Rupal, Candice, Winona, Tenzin, Beth, Victor), engagement with Buddhist socialising influences could be better described as intermittent rather than stable. Although all these participants noted specific periods of intense learning and immersion in Buddhist communities, over several months or years, they also noted periods of questioning, experimentation with different traditions, non-identification as Buddhists, or lack of involvement in Buddhism. Bob, for example, noted that during his VCE years, 'Buddhism went out of vogue' for him as he was focused on achieving high marks. He then began doing more reading and entered an 'Atheistic period', until a friend invited him to come to a Buddhist event, and Buddhism became part of his life again. Ellen also related that after her first initial year of trying to learn about Buddhism by herself as a teenager, she became confused and subsequently stopped pursuing Buddhism for a few years.

I think um probably after a year or two of kind of quite intensely um reading about it and trying to understand it I then just sort of went, 'Oh, I'm not sure, like maybe this isn't for me or it's not quite what I understood it to be', and then for a period of a number of years I had a, kind of less of a connection with it, and then probably in the last five years kind of came back to it again in a bit of a different way...I think...I went to a meditation group...and from there found out about the [Buddhist group], and started going quite regularly to their young adult group, and uh, sutta readings and meditation sessions and having a bit more of a dialogue I guess about Buddhism. Hearing people's different perspectives on the teachings, I think that really solidified things a bit more for me, and I understood things differently than I had when I was fifteen years old I guess.

Rather than experiencing Buddhist socialisation as a stable escalation of commitment, many participants' involvement in Buddhism varied over time. Giddens' (1991: 5) description of self-identity as a 'reflexively organised endeavour', 'which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives' is

applicable here, as many participants experienced notable breaks, changes in direction and engagement with different people and ideas. As Giddens (1991: 5) writes, 'The more tradition loses its hold...the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options'. This was perhaps most applicable to participants who were not brought up in an ethno-religious Buddhist community. In the absence of a traditional Buddhist upbringing, choices regarding religious commitment had to be continually made. Yet for all participants, the proliferation of contemporary Buddhist socialising influences required constant assessment regarding applicability to one's life. This highlights the role of personal responsibility in Buddhist identity negotiation – a finding which will be further developed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter presented key features of religious transmission drawn from interviews with young Australian Buddhist practitioners. These features were: parental and temple influence, multidirectional intergenerational flows, global flows and mobilities, material culture, and related fields of knowledge, and fluid and diffuse social networks. These findings support the idea that future research and the development of a theoretical framework for studying Buddhist youth identity in Australia should look beyond temple and parental influence and an ethno-religious socialisation approach in general, and acknowledge the diverse, fluid, hybrid and multidirectional social exchanges occurring amongst young Australian Buddhist practitioners.

As the examples in this chapter show, participants were shaped by multiple religious socialising influences within and beyond the temple and family. In addition, they were required to navigate their religious engagement alongside other interests and life commitments such as work, study and changes in living arrangements. As a result of these volatile conditions, many participants displayed an intermittent engagement in Buddhism, with periods of high, low, or no engagement at all. These findings are not surprising, given that descriptions of young adulthood emphasise increasing fragmentation, protracted periods of study, unstable employment and less predictability overall (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007: 34-5).

Similar to other recent work on youth religiosity (Berger & Ezzy, 2007; Collins-Mayo & Dandelion, 2010: 4; Ranta, Pessi & Gronland, 2017; Yip & Page 2013), I contend that an understanding of the religious socialisation experiences of young Australian Buddhist practitioners is enhanced by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2002) depiction of late-modern society as characterised by individualisation. That is, young Australian Buddhist practitioners were required to individually negotiate their religious identities amidst an ever-increasing array of socialising influences and unpredictable life trajectories. As the examples above show, while participants still engaged with traditional Buddhist socialising influences, they were required to make choices about which other alternate Buddhist socialising influences to engage with, and how to engage with them. These findings are consistent with Bouma's (2006: 98-9) observation that contemporary forms of religiosity in Australia are now 'less reliant on the formal organisations' of religious institutions, and are part of a trend towards 'do-it-yourself' religiosity which reflect larger cultural trends of increased levels of personal agency and decision making. Moreover, participants in my study *wanted* to engage with multiple Buddhist socialising influences, for example, by travelling regularly overseas to meet with Buddhist teachers, in order to develop their knowledge and deepen their practice of Buddhism. This demonstrates the perceived importance of working on the self, and the significance of individual reflexivity in Buddhist youth identity negotiation. These findings show that it is not enough to say that 'ethnic' Buddhists may be more like 'convert' Buddhists, and that there are historically contingent underpinnings that shape young people's engagement with Buddhism in diverse and unpredictable ways which go beyond a simplistic ethnic enculturation versus modernist convert divide. Furthermore, participants' ability to spread Buddhist ideas amongst other Australians upon their return should be recognised, as this is an example of the link between individual and social development, described by Elias (1994: 210) as the link between *psychogenesis* and *sociogenesis* (Van-Krieken, 1998: 6). As Elias (1994: 213-4) points out, the links between individual and social development are multiple, with individuals moving between interdependent groups of people, or 'figurations', as he called them. In the next chapter, I further explore the dynamism of these figurations with regard to religious belonging, to build an understanding of Buddhist youth belonging in Australia

which emphasises the fluidity, interdependence and contextualisation of religious identity.

Chapter 6: Belonging

In the previous chapter, we saw how young Australian Buddhist practitioners were required to negotiate multiple religious socialising influences, and how their individual life circumstances played a key role in their engagement or non-engagement with Buddhism at different points in their life. In contrast to an approach which might frame Buddhist identity as static or singular, the previous chapter drew attention to the overall process of negotiating Buddhist identity vis-à-vis multiple religious socialising influences which might have more or less significance depending on their life circumstances at the time, and which might cause individuals to feel more or less Buddhist at different points in their life.

This chapter further develops a processual understanding of Buddhist identity negotiation by drawing attention to the way both belonging and exclusion may be experienced by young Australian Buddhist practitioners as they move across different social contexts. It acknowledges the spaces and contexts in which Buddhist identity is facilitated by positive socialising influences, but also draws attention to experiences of marginalisation amongst young Australian Buddhist practitioners, which have largely been overlooked. It discusses how perceptions about Buddhism within a given context are not always obvious, and need to be figured out. It also explores the dispositions young Buddhist practitioners develop or adopt to deal with unpredictable and contextualised perceptions about Buddhism within the contexts of their lives.

This chapter firstly discusses the structural factors which facilitate the belonging of young Australian Buddhist practitioners in an Australian context, which are multiculturalism and positive perceptions about Buddhism in Australia. It argues that while multiculturalism and positive perceptions of Buddhism both facilitate the belonging experiences of young Australian Buddhist practitioners, they also have the potential to obscure other, less obvious forms of marginalisation. These include: anti-religious sentiment; ethnic, racial and linguistic differences within Buddhist

communities; a perception of Buddhism as incompatible with Western culture; religious illiteracy, and national social norms which conflict with Buddhist teachings.

As models for theorising Buddhist youth belonging in the West, to my knowledge, do not yet exist, I draw upon models for conceptualising the belonging and identity experiences of other religious minorities in the West to structure my analysis of Australian Buddhist youth, and identify key themes and patterns in relation to belonging amongst young Australian Buddhist practitioners. My central argument is that although young Australian Buddhist practitioners experience exclusion both within and beyond Buddhist institutions, they show no signs of developing a minoritised religious identity, which tends to pit minority religions against 'mainstream' host culture; for example, Islam versus Western culture. Rather, young Australian Buddhist practitioners demonstrate complicity with regard to the religious norms and narratives within an Australian context, and hybridity in their religious identity negotiations. They also display an unquestioning self-responsibility with regard to negotiating belonging and exclusion across situations of ethnic, racial and linguistic differences. I argue that these three factors – complicity, hybridity and self-responsibility – form the basis of negotiations of religious belonging amongst young Australian Buddhist practitioners, and represent an interaction of Buddhist philosophy with the Australian social context.

Crucially, young Australian Buddhist practitioners are significant players in the interaction of Buddhist philosophy with Australian culture, shaping their experiences of belonging vis-à-vis Australian social, cultural and political frameworks. This demonstrates the real work young Australian Buddhist practitioners are required to perform in order to 'belong' in various social contexts within and beyond the Buddhist community in Australia, problematising assumptions about the inclusion of young Buddhist practitioners in Australia due to multicultural success and the popularity of Buddhism in Australia. I suggest that the use of these strategies by young Australian Buddhist practitioners reflects a disposition of cosmopolitan irony, to adopt Bryan Turner's (2002) term, which is the irony of distancing oneself from one's own culture in order to respect others' cultures in a contemporary, globalised world. This chapter

will discuss both the benefits and disadvantages of adopting this approach for young Australian Buddhist practitioners.

Inclusion

Multicultural success in Australia

Multiculturalism in Australia is often cited as a success story; unlike Europe, Australia has managed to move away from assimilation and integration to implement a multicultural policy which enjoys widespread acceptance amongst the general populace (Poynting & Mason, 2008: 235; Hartwich, 2011; Harris, 2013: 8; Bouma, 2016). At its core, Australian multicultural policy aims to strengthen social cohesion and to respect expressions of cultural diversity within the framework of Australian law, values, identity and citizenship (Australian Government Department of Social Services, 2014). It aims to ensure equitable access and participation in Australian social, economic and cultural life regardless of cultural and linguistic background, and 'opposes all forms of racism, discrimination, intolerance and prejudice' through the development of anti discrimination laws (Australian Government Department of Social Services, 2013: 5). It states that Australians of all backgrounds are 'entitled to celebrate, practice and maintain their cultural heritage, traditions and language within the law and free from discrimination' (Australian Government Department of Social Services, 2013: 6). Within such a framework, religious minorities such as Buddhists should ostensibly feel comfortable expressing their religious beliefs and practices in an Australian context, as long as they do so in a manner which does not threaten Australian law, values, identity and citizenship.

Findings from my study show that young Australian Buddhist practitioners have indeed benefitted from Australia's multicultural policy in a number of ways. Firstly, as Buddhist temples in Australia are key sites where ethno-religious traditions are preserved, Buddhist practitioners from Asian backgrounds are able to express, practice and maintain their cultural heritage within the framework of Australian law. In the current study, Buddhist temples played an important role in helping some participants establish and maintain ties with the ethnic and religious heritage of their parents. Terry, for example, related:

I think that's [the temple] the only place that I have a strong bond with the Vietnamese community as I have participate[d] in helping my own youth group through New Year's, through the Vesak, Buddha's Birthday, also...various other festivities.

These findings echo those of previous studies which show how Buddhist institutions help preserve ethnic and religious heritage amongst Buddhist immigrants (Bouma, 1996; Vasi, 2011). More generally, my study also found that participants cited multiculturalism as a key factor in promoting tolerance and respect for all religions, although perhaps with the proviso that one lived in a metropolitan or urban area. Faye observed that in the city in particular, which she described as a 'multicultural kind of area', people were generally 'pretty positive and pretty open minded' about Buddhism. Ellen, too, contrasted 'metropolitan Melbourne' with 'outback Western Queensland', saying that she felt it was 'fine to be a Buddhist or not to be a Buddhist' in metropolitan Melbourne, but probably not in other parts of Australia.

Multiculturalism, then, can be seen as helpful in promoting a sense of belonging for young Australian Buddhist practitioners adopting the religious traditions on their parents, or for promoting religious inclusion in urban areas in general. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, young Australian Buddhist practitioners do not necessarily practice a form of Buddhism that is similar to that of their parents. Since current multicultural policy emphasises the preservation of an individual or group's existing ethnic or religious heritage, it does not adequately account for intergenerational differences in religious practice, and the identities of religious converts. It also does not account for hybrid, fluid and contextualised variations of religious identity. As discussed in the Literature Review, it is necessary to consider young Australian Buddhist practitioners within a new era of multicultural citizenship (Harris, 2013: 4-5) which recognises these complex subject positions. These complexities and their effect on the belonging experiences of young Australian Buddhist practitioners are explored in a later section.

Buddhism positively imagined

Another factor which facilitated belonging amongst young Australian Buddhist practitioners in my study was the perception of Buddhism as a relatively well-accepted religion. This perception rests on two premises – that Buddhism is associated with positive values such as ‘happiness, harmony with the environment, and compassion’, largely emphasised by figures such as the Dalai Lama (Barker & Rocha, 2011: 1), and that Buddhism represents little identifiable threat to Australian society. In the second instance, a perception of Buddhism in Australia as benign and unthreatening can be contrasted to narratives about Islam – which have elicited perceived national security concerns particular after the 2001 September 11 attacks (Bouma, Pickering, Halafoff & Dellal, 2007; Mansouri & Wood, 2008; Markus, 2016). As Halafoff et al. (2012) observe:

As Buddhism is perceived to pose little risk or threat to Australian society, compared to Christian or Islamic extremism or New Religious Movements, relatively little investment has been made by state actors to develop a greater understanding of Buddhism and to assist Buddhist communities, and young people in particular, with processes of exclusion. However, long-held fears and prejudices that mainstream Australians have toward Asian immigrants, both despite and because of Australia’s geographical proximity to Asia, remain an ongoing issue since the 1940s.

Thus in comparison to Islam, there is little, if any sustained narrative about the threat of other minoritised religions in Australia such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism to the ‘Australian way of life’. By default, then, the absence of such a narrative makes perceptions about these religions comparatively favourable to perceptions about Islam. Findings from my study show that this ‘comparative effect’ shaped belonging experiences amongst young Australian Buddhist practitioners in my study in a favourable way. For example, as Ben reported, ‘it’s got a pretty good public face’, and Tenzin mentioned, ‘I don’t think it’s something you would deliberately keep hidden, your Buddhist part of your identity’. Other descriptions of Buddhism included ‘the good guy of the religions’ (Beth). Buddhism was also associated with attributes others

approved of, such as peace, meditation, mindfulness and compassion (Evie, Faye). Maria explained that Buddhism was generally viewed in a positive light as it 'doesn't have a bad rap, like a lot of other religions that maybe try to preach, or may have abuse in their past'. These sentiments find some validation in Bouma's (2012: 51) study on religious social distance in Australia, which found that respondents from the 'most established' religious institutions in Australia – the Anglican, Catholic, Uniting and Presbyterian denominations – would welcome Buddhists as family members (26.1%) over Born Again Christians (25.8%), Jews (24.5%), Hindus (22.2%), Muslims (17.5%) and Jehovah's Witnesses (14.4%).

Yet it is worth questioning the extent to which this relatively low level of antipathy can be interpreted as a genuine inclusion of young Australian Buddhist practitioners. In my study, three participants (Beth, Maria, Tenzin) mentioned that others told them that Buddhism would be their choice if they had to choose a religion. As Tenzin observed, however, this statement also served as a subtle reminder of the fact that most people chose not to be religious, making the statement less positive than it sounded:

Most people react really positively. They'll usually come back with like, oh if I was to be any religion, Buddhism would be my religion...but the subtle point about that is, I'm not interested in religion, if I'm not. You know, that's what they're really saying. If I was to be in any religion, Buddhism would be it. But I'm not religious.

These findings challenge the extent to which Buddhism is accepted in Australian society, and suggest that other narratives are also at work in the Australian context. The following sections show that these include narratives of religious distance, anti-religious sentiment, religious illiteracy, eurocentricity, and a perceived clash between Australia as a Western country and Buddhism as an Asian religion.

Exclusion

We're all just minorities now

As discussed in the Introduction, Australia's religious landscape has changed significantly over the last century. These changes include the overall decline of Christian denominations, the growth of minority religions largely due to immigration, and an increase in the religious 'nones', most notably in the youth category (18-34 years). The percentage of young adults identifying as Christian dropped from 74% in 1976 to 50% in 2011, while the percentage of young adults who had 'no religion' grew from 12% to 29% over the same time period (ABS: 2013). Not surprisingly then, participants observed that both a Christian heritage and social norms not to discuss religion shaped their belonging experiences. Kieu, for example, mentioned that she avoided speaking about Buddhism to her friends in school, as many of them were Christian:

I think it's really hard to talk to those who don't understand Buddhism. And...it's probably the reason I can't really talk to my friends at school at school about Buddhism and stuff like that. Because I think they have a strong belief in Christianity [sic] or Cath-...because some of them are Catholic as well. So they have a strong belief in their own religion.

In addition to the dominance of Christianity in Australia, another common observation amongst participants was that religion was largely absent from their interactions with others, especially those who were not religious. Five participants found Buddhism to be irrelevant to everyday conversations (Bob, Nicole, Steven, Tenzin, Winona), and Nicole related that she generally did not talk about Buddhism, 'unless someone asks me, or it just happens to come up'. This approach was shared by four other participants (Bob, Neville, Steven, Victor, Vivien). Neville illustrated the strong social norms not to discuss religion, saying, 'We don't discuss religion in friendship groups. That's a bit, yeah, that's a bit weird. Yeah. That's *very* weird'. These findings corroborate Bouma's (2006: 45) description of Australia as a country characterised by 'low temperature' religiosity, leading to muted or barely discernable displays of religion in public life.

A number of participants (Evie, Faye, Neville, Victor, Winona) also recognised a growing anti-religious sentiment, which made it increasingly difficult for religious practitioners in general, regardless of their faith, to gain acceptance. Faye noted:

I think percentage wise, I think it is getting more multifaith, but I feel like Australia's majority is starting to be people of no faith, and then all the others are just, we're all minorities now.

This observation is not surprising amongst young Australians, given that young people in particular are more likely to identify with 'no religion' (as noted above). While there were many positive comments about Buddhism as reported by participants, Buddhism also had the capacity to attract criticism from others, particularly if it was associated with religion more generally. Anti-religious sentiment was not always discreet, with some participants experiencing very clear indications of disapproval from others. When asked about the responses she received regarding Buddhism from people who were not religious, Evie responded:

Avoiding the conversation, trying to end the conversation, change the topic, um, trying to kind of shut down, say, my values of personal exploration and growth with something different that they value such as material gain. Um, oh well once when I told a friend I was getting into Buddhism in a very experiential, you know, non-dogmatic way, and he's an atheist and a med student and he still, like in a comic kind of way, recoiled and was like, 'Ohh, religion, get away from me.' Um, as a sort of joke, but I guess that reflects um, you know, how strongly some people wanna hear about it.

This example illustrates an intolerance towards Buddhism or religion in general, despite the fact that Evie prefaced her religious involvement with a statement emphasising the 'experiential', 'non-dogmatic' aspects of her practice. It also reveals a pressure to engage with religion in a socially acceptable way, as if religion were by default, non-experiential and dogmatic. This highlights young Australian Buddhist practitioners' own, likely unintentional, role in perpetuating narratives about religion

as non-experiential and dogmatic. This point is picked up later on in a discussion about young Australian Buddhist practitioners' own role in creating experiences of inclusion and exclusion.

Thus, while some participants were aware of changes to Australia's spiritual landscape alleviating stigmatisation towards minority religions, including the erosion of Christian hegemony and the growth of minority religions, they were also aware of an increase in anti-religious sentiment, which had a capacity to minoritise all religious adherents on the basis of religious identification alone. Young Australian Buddhist practitioners therefore not only had to contend with being a minority in terms of numbers; they also had to contend with a discourse devaluing religious experience and identification. This made it difficult for participants to share their religious experiences and viewpoints with others, and raise levels of religious literacy, or knowledge about Buddhism and other diverse religions in Australia. This is discussed in the next section.

A fat, happy man who laughs if you rub his tummy

Religious literacy has recently been described as integral to meeting the needs of an increasingly multifaith and secular society such as Australia (Halafoff, 2013; Halafoff & Lam, 2015). While the dissemination of Buddhist ideas and practices in Australia has increased in recent years, it is worthwhile noting data from the current study which suggests that religious literacy with regard to Buddhism appears to be low. This was the view of three participants (Ben, Bob, Neville), with two participants (Bob, Neville) remarking about the inaccuracy of popular images of the historical Gautama Buddha as a 'fat' man who 'laugh[s] if you rub his tummy' (Neville), or 'that happy, fat Buddha statue'. In addition to such appropriations of Buddhist iconography, Ben noted that knowledge about Buddhism was often relegated to a simplistic interpretation of the Dalai Lama's teachings. He explained:

I think that a lot of people don't understand what Buddhism's about...well they see the Dalai Lama and they think it's all about well just live your life and be happy. When I think Buddhist philosophy's a lot deeper than that, it's based on

the idea that life is suffering. And there is a way out of that, um, through right action.

Other misunderstandings about Buddhism included the idea that Buddhists were attempting to cut themselves out from society, and eliminate all their desires (Candice). These misunderstandings could sometimes create a distancing or dislike of Buddhism, and a perceived clash between Buddhism and Australian or Western culture, as discussed in the next section.

Buddhist identity and 'Australian' culture

For some participants in the current study, there were perceptions of a binary between Buddhism and the West. Evie, for example, likened her practice of Buddhism to the experience of an international student coming to live in Australia. When asked if she had experienced any conflict between Australian culture and Buddhist practice, she answered:

Hell yes, like um, I feel that Australian culture is so much against the type of lifestyle that Buddhism is promoting me to live, and I find that conflict or that contradiction really, really difficult, to the point where I feel like I've now become so Buddhist that...I feel like I've lost a lot of my Australian culture, or like I'm starting to understand a lot, what it must feel like for an international student to come and live in Australia.

Evie further contrasted Buddhism to Western culture, emphasising the difficulties she experienced trying to reconcile her Buddhist ideals with Western culture:

It's because, I guess most Western societies now are you know so fixated on materialism and in a really self-centred way. And...then that feeds into, you know, striving to be successful in a career path and getting good grades at uni and a lot of that is seeming so much more irrelevant to me now, um, to the point where, like I consider just throwing it all away and like, maybe becoming a nun...

Beth, too, felt that Australian culture 'values external things, like being you know, loud and achieving'. By contrast, Buddhism was described as 'more quiet' and 'introspective'. Beth maintained that this contrast 'created a divide' between herself and her family and friends, that had begun to undermine her sense of belonging. At the time of interviewing, Beth related that she was 'still learning' how to integrate both Buddhism and Western culture. Some participants mentioned examples such as the binge-drinking and meat eating culture in Australia (Beth, Candice, Nicole), and how this created difficulties when engaging in social activities, especially with other young people.

Perceptions about the conflict between Buddhism and Western culture were not unidirectional; they were also evident in the positioning of Buddhist identity during interactions participants had with others. This was observed in comments questioning the legitimacy of White Buddhist practitioners, from people who had difficulty seeing the compatibility between Buddhism and being White or Western. Ben, for example, noted that people often questioned his ethnic origins once they found out he was a Buddhist. He said, 'often the question is, oh really. Are you fully European? Why are you a Buddhist?' Tenzin, too, noted the perceived disjunction between Buddhism and Western culture, revealing how he was verbally abused for wearing his Buddhist robes in public, and labelled a 'fraud, or charlatan or something like that'. He explained, 'I think it's 'cause I was White and I was in the robes, and he thought I was a faker'. Tenzin likened the experience of being Buddhist and a Westerner to belonging to 'two different tribes', a predicament he ultimately chose to resolve by disrobing as a monk. While not all White participants experienced such a conflict between their religion and race, perhaps due to the fact that most did not take the step of becoming ordained and wearing Buddhist robes, the experiences recounted here illustrate the ways White Buddhist converts can also experience a conflict between their Buddhist identification or practice and Western culture.

Buddhism and the interaction with race and ethnicity

As discussed in the Introduction, the past few decades have seen Buddhism develop both detraditionalised and globalised forms, with young people positioned as most

likely to engage with these emerging forms of Buddhism. Yet despite the spread of Buddhism beyond religious institutions, temples remain one of the key places for young people to physically engage with Buddhist communities. Participants in the current study attended a range of events and activities held at or organised by Buddhist temples, including retreats, Dharma talks, meditation classes, youth groups, and major annual events, such as Lunar New Year, *Vesak Day*¹⁸ and *kathina* ceremonies¹⁹. While many of these events attract thousands of participants from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds, they are also steeped in ethnic tradition, such as the annual Buddha Day Festival held in the neutral space of Federation Square, Melbourne, which has in the past featured cultural performances, enabled visitors to practice calligraphy, 'bathe' the Buddha, and offer alms to Buddhist monks (Fo Guang Shan Melbourne and Buddha's Light International Association of Victoria, 2016).

Not surprisingly then, it was evident from interviews with participants that ethnicity and race played a significant role in the way young Australian Buddhist practitioners experienced belonging within a temple context. Many participants who fitted the homogenous, ethno-religious profile, and were raised as Buddhist within Asian Buddhist families (Anh, Kieu, Steven, Yoshi, Yen, Terry, Peter), reported that ethnicity and language greatly facilitated their involvement in Buddhist communities. In many cases, familiarity with the language and cultural background of the temple facilitated participants' access to resources, communication with the Sangha and lay community, and participation in temple activities such as chanting, Dharma classes and major events. These findings echo those of recent studies of second generation Buddhists in North America and Canada (McLellan, 2008) and second generation Hindu youth in Canada, which found that engagement with temples centred around ethno-religious activities (Amarasingam, 2010; Kurien, 2005).

¹⁸ A major Buddhist event which commemorates the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and passage to nirvana. Also known as Wesak (Keown, 2003: 335).

¹⁹ These ceremonies mark the end of the annual rainy season retreat in countries where Theravada Buddhism is practiced. They typically involve the offering of new robes to monks by the laity.

While the benefits of ethno-religious engagement were apparent for participants who identified with the religious tradition they were raised in, the same did not always apply to participants who identified with a religious tradition differing from the one they were raised in, or those who were not raised as Buddhists at all. Some participants from the current study noted that the ethnic significance of temple activities meant that those who were not familiar with the language and cultural background of a temple were likely to be disengaged or excluded from particular temple activities. For example, Neville, a bilingual Vietnamese-Australian participant, described his local Buddhist temple as a supportive environment for learning about Buddhism, however he admitted that opportunities for involvement were limited for those who did not speak Vietnamese. As he explained:

It's with language, the language barrier is a bit hard for um, Westerners, like Westerners can get involved, but more in terms of fundraising and charity work, like maybe volunteering work, but it would be very difficult to participate in um, the daily chant, like the more spiritual practices of the temple, yeah. I find that there's still a language barrier, and there's not, we don't chant in English, or there's not many sutras, English sutras. Oh there are books you can borrow and stuff, but we at the temple, we don't read that. It's all in Vietnamese, so yeah. It is a bit hard if you want to practice, um at the temple, practice spiritual uh, yeah, with the majority.

These ethnic and linguistic barriers was strongly felt by four participants identifying as Westerners (Beth, Bob, Tenzin, Winona), who cited such barriers as significant to influencing their disengagement from Buddhist temples. When asked how she perceived of herself as a Buddhist, Winona replied:

First thing that just came to my head there was someone who doesn't fit in, because when I go to group places where other people are practicing Buddhism, um they're normally from an Asian background or appear to be. And they might have grown up in Australia but they look like they have Asian parents.

Two participants (Beth, Tenzin) said they believed the exclusion at temples was not intentional (Bob and Winona did not specify either way), however this perceived exclusion significantly affected their sense of belonging in ethnic Buddhist communities. As Beth related:

On the one hand I don't really feel like I fit into the kind of Buddhist community here as much, because if I go to the [Sri Lankan Buddhist temple], like the people are lovely but they just, I feel a bit um, different from them in some ways. Like often they've been Buddhist since they were born and um, sort of, but they're very lovely, and you know we get on, but in some ways I feel like I sort of, culturally share more with my friends who aren't Buddhist, as opposed to like, the community of Buddhist people.

As a result of her sense of exclusion from the Sri Lankan Buddhist temple, Beth limited her role there to organising retreats. She also decided to run Buddhist meditation classes in the university she attended, a role which did not require her to speak a language other than English. Rupal summarised the situation astutely, identifying ethnic segregation as a key feature of Buddhist temples in Australia.

I mean like, there's something called Sri Lankan temples, Thai temples, Vietnamese temples, why? Because they are all Buddhist, right? They teach the same thing. So, then why don't, why can't you go to a Thai temple, and go to Vietnamese temple. So it's mostly like community based.

As Rupal suggested, the ethnic segregation of Buddhist temples in Australia had the effect of establishing expected or preferred types of engagement with Buddhist temples, potentially limiting Buddhist engagement beyond the purposes of shoring up ethnic community relations. However, not all participants experienced ethnic Buddhist temples as limiting. Ellen, who described her ethnicity as 'Anglo', claimed that she felt 'really welcomed' in the Sri Lankan Buddhist temple she had participated in, and that her exposure to people from a range of different cultural backgrounds enabled her to 'understand a lot more about Buddhism than I did when I was just sort of on my own

in isolation'. Maria and Victor also appraised the Buddhist centres they attended as excellent sources of support for their practice, which inculcated a heightened sense of belonging. Victor, who was raised as a Vietnamese Buddhist family, described the Korean Zen Buddhist community as 'one of the very strongest places where I've felt that I've belonged'. He explained that unlike the 'practical, secular world', where 'experience and knowledge is hoarded, or scarce', in Buddhism, 'there's no scarcity, so people help each other in their practice'. These examples suggest that religious scholars should be cautious of attributing structural factors such as ethnicity, race and religious institutions with an undue level of influence, as both belonging and exclusion can be experienced by young Western and non-Western Buddhists in Australian temples. They also suggest that the purpose of involvement in Buddhist communities was not to unite against a shared sense of victimhood or oppression, but to develop their own practice and support networks. The absence of an oppositional relationship between participants and the Australian host culture suggests that a binary model of conflict does not accurately reflect the belonging experiences of young Australian Buddhist practitioners. These findings contrast to the findings of studies mentioned earlier which show how Asian Buddhist temples have served to provide a buffer for racist hostility in the United States.

In consideration of the examples above, it would be insufficient to utilise a minoritised model to conceptualise these belonging experiences. As explained in the literature review, a minoritised model of religious identity conceptualises religious identity as a binary opposition between the Self and the exclusionary Other. Minority religious youth are perceived to be uniformly oppressed in a generalised Western Anglosphere, and must seek recompense through a politicised minority rights discourse. This framework is not supported by the examples discussed, despite participants' experiences of exclusion based on ethnicity.

The next section further illustrates how young Australian Buddhist practitioners negotiated religious identity in ways which diverged from a minoritised model of religious identity. This is demonstrated in three ways. Firstly, conceptualisations of national culture were not always easy to pinpoint or define, preventing participants

from drawing on a stable reference point or 'other' to construct a minoritised religious identity. The hyphenated identities of participants in this study suggests that minority religious identity and national identity could be simultaneously adopted, and were not mutually incompatible. Secondly, participants in the study took active steps to negotiate a sense of belonging by engaging positively with existing Buddhist groups and creating their own communities of belonging, rather than uniting over a sense of oppression or victimisation. Thirdly, participants in the study accepted rather than challenged norms regarding cultural diversity and the expression of religion in Australian society. Consequently, three key elements appear to shape the negotiations of belonging amongst young Australian Buddhist practitioners – hybridity, personal responsibility and complicity. These are discussed in the next section.

Adaptive strategies

Hybridity

As discussed, a minoritised model of religious identity views religious identity construction as a dialectical process between the self and the Western 'other' (Duderija, 2010). The 'self' in this case is assumed to be an ethnic or religious minority, while the 'other' is expected to be a Westerner, of Anglo-Celtic heritage. Yet in the case of White Buddhist converts, the Western 'other' is also the self, rendering binary models of religious identity construction too simplistic to reflect the subject positionings of those who transgress the homogenised boundaries such a model assumes. In such cases, hybridity is a defining feature of religious identification.

In addition to adopting hybrid Buddhist identities, participants also drew attention to the difficulty of locating or defining Australian culture, and of constructing a sense of belonging amidst diverse perceptions about Buddhism and religion in general. Ellen, for example, argued that dominant stereotypes such as 'easy-going people who like the beach and barbecuing meat' and 'a fair go' did not provide a strong point of national identification. Participants from the current study preferred to talk about a multiplicity of cultural contexts within the Australian landscape. When asked about

receptiveness of Australians to Buddhism, six participants (Ellen, Evie, Faye, Henry, Tenzin and Yen) gave multifaceted responses. Faye replied:

Um, Australians in general, that's a really hard one to put out there...I would have to kind of, think I'd have to divide it a bit. In the small town that I come from, I feel like it's very monoculture. They're like...outback Australians so they're really xenophobic and they don't...like anything that's different...But I find that if I'm in Melbourne city...urban environment...in the city sort of multicultural kind of area...I feel like they kind of represent the sort of more general Australian, and I find that their concept of Buddhism is...pretty positive, and pretty open minded.

As Faye relates, perceptions of Buddhism vary across different social contexts in Australia. Similarly, Ellen describes Australia as a country with a range of micro-contexts, across which perceptions of Buddhism vary:

Australia is a really diverse place, and in terms of you know, metropolitan Melbourne, is gonna be really different to outback um, Western Queensland, so...I think...the openness perhaps of different communities is gonna really vary...you know it's not a binary, like you have to be this or you have to be that....it depends on like the smaller um, social networks, as well as the broader Australian society.

Like Faye, Ellen related that she liked living in the 'metropolitan, diverse community' of Melbourne as Buddhism was more accepted, however she did not think that would necessarily be the case if she was living in a different part of Australia. Ellen additionally makes the point that perceptions about Buddhism are 'not a binary', or not always completely favourable or unfavourable within particular contexts. These examples demonstrate the difficulties of conceptualising Buddhist identity either as a complementary hybrid with Australian identity, or conceptualising it in opposition to Australian culture (as described by the minoritised religious identity model). They draw attention to the complexity of the subject positions which may be negotiated in

response to ambiguous perceptions about Buddhism. Smith et al. (2016: 207) report on a similar finding amongst participants in their work on race, gender and sexuality amongst British Buddhists. One particular participant, Sophie, is described as having views of her identity which are 'cosmopolitan', or 'part of the world', enabling her to transcend 'binary opposites on an individual, personal level' with regard to race.

In my own study, Ellen's elaboration, 'it's not a binary, like you have to be this or that' also demonstrates how the complexity of subject positions is linked to the relationality of identity, and the way expressions of Buddhist identity might change according to the perceptions about Buddhism held by others, particularly if these perceptions are strongly positive or negative. This relationality, as we will see in the next section, demonstrates the perceived importance of joining or building supportive networks within which to practice and express Buddhism. Since this chapter as well as the previous has already discussed young Australian Buddhist practitioners' engagement with supportive networks which already exist, such as families, Buddhist temples and multifaith groups, the next section draws attention to the supportive networks developed by young Buddhist practitioners themselves. These examples further show the inapplicability of a minoritised model of defensive religious identity for conceptualising the Buddhist identity negotiations of participants in my study.

Personal responsibility

It's been really supportive. But it was deliberate. Deliberate effort, it wasn't, it didn't happen by accident. It was a group of us that deliberately did that, deliberately, deliberately um, tried to become better friends, and then deliberately tried create the context for other people to do the same. Because we, we realised that um, we realised that amongst our other friends, we'd marginalised ourselves a little bit, in a sense that we were really interested in practicing the dharma, practicing Buddhism, and our friends, other friends weren't, it was a bit odd. So we wanted a context that was um, it was normal. Sort of, it would feel normal for us, and feel normal for other people. (Fabian)

As the example above shows, some participants were willing to create their own communities of belonging, rather than 'fall victim' to the expectations and negative perceptions of others who did not share their beliefs and practices. As Fabian emphasised, this was a 'deliberate effort', an attempt to redefine young Australian Buddhists as 'normal' rather than 'marginalised'. Fabian expressed satisfaction with his efforts to create such a community, revealing the capacity of young Australian Buddhist practitioners to navigate situations of conflict and marginalisation. Candice and Evie also described their attempts to create communities of belonging, both online and offline, in order to support their own practices and the practices and interests of others. These included interest groups on social media and community garden initiatives. In some cases, the formation of such groups was also accompanied by boundary-setting. Evie for example related that the social media group she created was set to 'private', meaning that only those added to the group could see the content. These examples suggest that attempts to create inclusion might inadvertently lead to exclusion for those who do not belong to the newly created group, lending a sense of caution to the notion that young Australian Buddhist practitioners are able to create genuinely inclusive communities. However as Candice mused,

I'm not sure to what extent closeness or identification with one group necessitates distance from the rest of society? Yeah. So I don't really don't know how to...if it's a good thing or not yet [laughs].

The rejection of an in-group/out-group system of identification here further demonstrates a movement away from the development of a minoritised Buddhist identity based on the exclusion of others. The examples above suggest that while the practice of a minoritised religion had the capacity to lead to isolation and social exclusion, young Australian Buddhist practitioners dealt with this social exclusion in a pro-social rather than defensive way, choosing to build mutually supportive communities rather than communities united by a sense of victimhood. The examples above also show that these communities also welcomed others who were seeking the same kind of support, rather than putting up defensive barriers against those who

were deemed 'outsiders'. As Fabian's statement demonstrates, the community he helped establish aimed to alleviate social isolation rather than contribute to it.

Consequently, we can see that while some participants may have faced religious discrimination, they sought to look after their belonging needs themselves by creating safe spaces within which they could express their religiosity, rather than expecting to receive a warm welcome wherever they went. These efforts are striking, particularly in Australia which, as noted earlier, is frequently cited as an example of multicultural success. These examples show how young Australian Buddhist practitioners in this study were willing to change their own life circumstances in order to practice their religion, rather than seeking acceptance and recompense from the prevailing host culture. They show an acceptance of the existing circumstances and a desire to live amicably with other Australians. This acceptance of the prevailing conditions can also be seen in participants' complicity regarding Australian cultural norms, which I discuss in the next section.

Complicity

While participants were faced with incompatibilities between Buddhism and Australian culture (for example, Australia's binge-drinking and meat eating culture), there was no evidence to suggest that any exclusion resulting from a conflict between Buddhism and Western culture was resolved in a confrontational manner, or that it led to the development of a victimised religious identity. Beth's statement, that she was 'still learning' to reconcile Buddhism with Australian culture implies an acceptance of existing social norms, rather than a desire to challenge the status quo. Indeed, many participants chose to make adjustments to their own behaviour to accommodate their religious preferences. As discussed earlier, Candice chose to act as the designated driver to avoid drinking while condoning it in her friends, while Faye chose to chant in her head to avoid offending others. Candice admitted that her decision to act as the designated driver allowed her to 'get out of it in a really cowardly way', while Faye emphasised that a privatisation of religion was part of Australian culture, stating, 'that's my country so that's how I go with it' [laughs]. These examples illustrate the simultaneous positioning of some young Australian Buddhist

practitioners in both Buddhist and Western cultures, and the acceptance of Australian cultural norms.

It is worthwhile unpacking these examples further, and questioning the reasons for such complicity, or unwillingness to engage in visible displays of religiosity. I suggest here that the unwillingness to challenge existing social norms regarding religion can be attributed to a 'cosmopolitan irony' (Turner, 2001; Turner, 2002) which young Australian Buddhist practitioners both adopt and respond to in their negotiations of belonging. The next section outlines this concept, and argues that the cosmopolitan irony displayed by young Australian Buddhist practitioners which shows how they value social harmony over robust expressions of Buddhist identity in contexts of cultural diversity.

Cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan irony

Cosmopolitanism can be briefly defined as an ethical position in which 'the individual tries to go beyond the strong psychological and evolutionary pressures to privilege those nearest and dearest to him or her' (Kendall, Woodward & Skrbis, 2009: 33). Rather than viewing oneself as a citizen of a particular country, one is a 'citizen of the world', as in the words of Diogenes of Sinope (Kendall, Woodward & Skrbis, 2009: 33). However, as Kendall, Woodward & Skrbis, 2009: 1, 10, 14) note, cosmopolitanism is a 'complex, multidimensional concept' which suffers from an indeterminacy which makes it difficult to identify cosmopolitan realities, subjects, characteristics and governance. For this reason, for the purposes of the discussion in this chapter, I utilise a specific characterisation of cosmopolitanism which appears to facilitate an understanding of young Australian Buddhist practitioners' negotiations of belonging. Drawing from the work of scholars who prefer to focus on a cosmopolitan 'disposition' (e.g. Hannerz, 1996; Vertovec & Cohen, 2002), I utilise Bryan Turner's description of 'cosmopolitan irony' in relation to multiculturalism to analyse the belonging experiences of young Australian Buddhist practitioners, rather than descriptions of

cosmopolitanism which are more substantive, such as Munck (2005) and Halafoff's (2013) depictions of 'ultramodern cosmopolitanism',²⁰.

As Turner (2002: 149) argues, an ironic distance is 'the most prized norm of wit and principle of taste' when individuals are required to continually interact with strangers. According to Turner (2001: 148; 2002: 55, 58) the irony of cosmopolitanism lies in a distancing from one's own culture in order to respect other cultures in a contemporary, globalised world. As a result of the distancing from their own culture, individuals also do not experience a strong sense of 'otherness' or opposition to different cultures. In the case of young Australian Buddhist practitioners, cosmopolitan irony is reflected in participants' simultaneous commitment to Buddhism, and their hesitations in speaking about and practicing their religion in public, out of respect for those practicing other religions. In the examples above, Candice makes a point about not stopping friends from drinking, showing a respect for diversity and an 'ironic distance' from her own religion. Similarly, Faye demonstrates an awareness and respect for the preferences of her housemates to not be exposed to foreign religious practices.

The relation of cosmopolitan irony to multiculturalism becomes apparent in participants' discussion of the effect of multiculturalism on their negotiations of belonging. Indeed, multiculturalism was cited as a factor limiting the expression of a Buddhist identity by two participants. Yen and Anh both related how they were sometimes hesitant about mentioning Buddhism to others, due to their awareness of the diversity in opinions and beliefs people held. Yen for example said:

...because we're so multicultural, I mean, you gotta be a...people are a bit sensitive sometimes, and you don't wanna like, I don't want people to get upset if I say anything, you know. Especially if I think they're a great person, but sometimes religion does get in the way for some, some people. So um, I

²⁰ A framework of governance which recognises the equal rights of citizens at the same time that it recognises their interdependence. It eschews national identification and emphasises the local and global ties which connect individuals (Halafoff, 2013: 21).

generally try and phrase things carefully. Be a bit more politically correct [laughs].

This sensitivity to the needs of others, and the default preferencing of the non-religious other suggests that cosmopolitan irony may be a discourse shaping the belonging experiences of young Australian Buddhist practitioners in multicultural Australia. The examples described above also raise the question of whether a respect for diversity, as purported by multiculturalism, can paradoxically lead to the erasure of religious expression from public life if pursued to its logical conclusion.

It appears that young Australian Buddhist practitioners from this study both adopt and respond to cosmopolitan irony in their negotiations of belonging across different social contexts, an approach which positions them as reflexive agents who take responsibility for their inclusion and exclusion within and beyond Buddhist institutions. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, self-responsibility, hybridity and complicity are three key factors shaping the belonging experiences of young Australian Buddhist practitioners, which represent an attempt to actualise Buddhist teachings in an Australian social context. Although participants from the study did not cite particular Buddhist teachings in this regard, Buddhist concepts such as dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), emptiness (*śūnyatā*), no self (*anattā*) and self-responsibility appeared to manifest in the hybrid or non-identification of study participants with standard categories of belonging, and their self-directed negotiations of belonging. In particular, a recognition of *pratītyasamutpāda*, or interdependence, appeared to be manifested in participants' perceptions of belonging in an Australian national context, with participants adopting strategies of practicing Buddhism which complemented, rather than challenged Australian culture. *Śūnyatā* appeared to be evident in participants' perceptions of Australian culture as a category with no intrinsic meaning. A recognition of *anattā* also appeared to be evident in participants' contextualised experiences of religious belonging, and the perceived absence of a monolithic 'Buddhist' or 'Western' identity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there was no evidence of a single narrative regarding religious belonging amongst young Australian Buddhist practitioners, as implied by a minoritised model of defensive religious identity. Such a model assumes that minority and majority cultures are homogenous and clearly definable, and that it is necessary to defend oneself against a hostile prevailing host culture. However as the findings discussed in this chapter show, participants found it difficult to define majority Australian culture, against which a defensive religious identity could develop. The hybrid identifications of participants in the study obscured boundaries around 'Buddhist' and 'Western' or 'Australian' identities, and individuals' own actions to facilitate their religious belonging suggests that they preferred to take responsibility for creating a sense of belonging rather than seeking recompense from the majority host culture, despite experiencing marginalisation within Australian society. These findings resonate with those of Smith et al. (2016: 228), who report that

Although often marginalised...Buddhists of colour and/or LGBTQI Buddhists are engaging creatively with Western Buddhist teachings, in ways that empower them and challenge them to move beyond narrower modes of identification, particularly when they are in the more cosmopolitan and anti-racist settings that support such endeavours.

While a binary, victimisation model is not supported by the current study, it is still important to recognise less obvious forms of marginalisation, and acknowledge the role of both structural and individual factors in shaping experiences of belonging amongst young Australian Buddhist practitioners. This chapter has discussed the influence of national cultural norms and the intersection of religion with race and ethnicity. It has shown how young Australian Buddhist practitioners are aware of the complexities shaping their religious belonging experiences, and take active measures to negotiate their belonging and exclusion experiences. This problematises assumptions about the inclusion of young Australian Buddhist practitioners due to multicultural success and the popularity of Buddhism in Australia, and highlights the

efforts young Australian Buddhist practitioners are required to take in order to experience a sense of belonging within and beyond Buddhist temples.

Chapter 7: Participation

This chapter analyses the civic and political participation experiences of young Australian Buddhist practitioners in this study. In particular, it aims to develop a Buddhist-specific framework for understanding youth participation, with reference to an emerging literature on individualised or ‘DIY’ participation amongst young people. For the purposes of this analysis, civic participation is considered to be a range of activities which individuals engage in to address areas of public concern, and improve the well-being of their communities and society at large (Boyd et al., 2011). Civic participation has been described by Yeung, Passmore & Packer (2012: 76) as ‘participation in the process of governance’ through taking part in activities addressing individual and community concern. Examples of civic participation include volunteering for non-governmental groups, fundraising for charitable organisations, working towards human rights, addressing social inequality, helping a neighbour with housework, community activities, giving food or money to a homeless person, or giving blood (Lewis, MacGregor & Putnam, 2012: 332; Ballard et al., 2015: 1). Civic engagement is particularly important for young people, especially those from disadvantaged groups (Chan, Ou & Reynolds, 2014: 1829). Similarly, political participation is also considered to be beneficial for both societies and marginalised youth themselves. For liberal theorists, an increase in political participation is considered to strengthen political systems, making them more responsive to the needs of citizens, and leading to the enhancement of political equality (Teorell, 2006; 792; Micheletti, 2015: 29). Examples of political participation include voting in elections, enrolling to vote, displaying interest in and knowledge about political events, participation in protests, attending local council meetings, writing letters to politicians, signing petitions, distributing election material, helping at election centres, and joining and fundraising for political parties.

This chapter shows that in the case of young Australian Buddhist practitioners, it is useful to adopt an individualised conception of participation which specifically focuses on ‘work on the self’ as a form of participation. Data from my research shows that for

young Buddhist practitioners, work on the self is intrinsically tied to helping others due to an understanding of interdependence (*pratītyasamutpāda*), which connects individual action to social change. I contend that there are four main implications of this outlook for young Australian Buddhist practitioners. The first is an attentiveness to the relationships developed in the process of participation. The second is a recognition of both the positive and negative consequences of participation. The third is a focus on personal responsibility in the participatory process. The fourth is a selective engagement with participatory practices to maximise beneficial outcomes and to minimise conflict. This chapter explains how Maffesoli's (1996) concept of 'disindividuation' helps explain participants' emphasis on collective, rather than individual decisions and actions, and how his concept of neo-tribalism helps account for the fleeting nature of the participatory communities participants took part in. It also explains how Elias's discussion of 'figurations' helps to theorise individuals' perception of themselves in relation to the communities they were helping. It explains how Elias's link between *sociogenesis* and *psychogenesis* helps theorise the perceived connection between helping oneself and helping others.

Socially engaged Buddhism in Australia and 'DIY' youth participation

Studies focusing on civic and political engagement amongst Buddhist practitioners in Australia are scant (Fitzpatrick, 2014; Sherwood, 2003), however the studies that do exist reveal a commitment to addressing issues of social and political concern. Research conducted by Patricia Sherwood (2003: 23-4) on socially engaged Buddhism has shown how Australian Buddhist organisations have been actively engaged in civic processes, including education, working with hospitals and hospices, working with the sick and dying in palliative care, visiting prisons, working with drug addicts, fundraising for the poor and needy in Australia and overseas, speaking up for human rights, and compassionate action on behalf of non-human sentient beings. However, as Sherwood's (2003: 86) study was conducted 15 years ago, her findings may not be reflective of the social, political and technological changes which have contributed towards shaping civic engagement today. Additionally, Sherwood did not study civic or political participation amongst young Australian Buddhists specifically, who may or may not be actively involved in Buddhist organisations such as the ones Sherwood

surveyed. As Chapter 5 discussed, young Australian Buddhist practitioners are not necessarily engaged with Buddhist organisations, and even if they are, they may engage in civic and political activities which may exceed or even contradict the organisational aims of the Buddhist centres they attend. The extent to which contemporary, young Australian Buddhist practitioners participate civically and politically, the ways they participate, their barriers to participation, and the impact of their participation on themselves and their communities is thus largely unknown, necessitating further, current research on citizenship participation amongst Buddhist youth in Australia. To this end, it is useful to consider the how recent work on youth participation, and descriptions of ‘DIY’ participation amongst young people in particular might also apply to young Australian Buddhist practitioners.

Recent work on youth participation in Western societies has sought to address concerns about the future of democratic, Western liberal democracies (Deutsches Jugend Institut, 2003; Micheletti, 2015), which stem from the perception that young people are apathetic, lazy and uninterested in formal civic and political processes (Harris & Wyn, 2010: 3). Such scholars have recognised the ways concerns about low levels of youth participation have led to the development of a raft of civics and citizenship policies and programs aimed at addressing this so-called civics ‘deficit’ (Harris, Wyn & Younes, 2010: 11), and have attempted to show that young people are in fact, civically and politically engaged, albeit in less formalised ways (Edwards, 2008: 1; Micheletti, 2015: 30).

One such stream of scholarship recognises individualised or ‘personalised’ political and civic activity which is organised around lifestyle choices and short-lived social groupings. W. Lance Bennett (2003: 5-6), for example, describes the new youth citizenship landscape as one which increasingly privileges an enhanced quality of life. The new, ‘self-Actualising citizen’, in Bennett’s (2003: 6) terms, prefers to personally define the nature of participation, pursuing acts such as ‘consumerism, community volunteering, or transnational activism’ rather than upholding government-defined responsibilities. Instead of engaging with formal institutions with regulated membership and activity, contemporary youth are purportedly pursuing pathways to

participatory action based on 'social recognition, self esteem, or friendship relations', underscoring the importance of lifestyle-based sociality over formal civic and political organisations. While these networks are said to be more personalised, they are also characterised by 'thin social ties' which are looser and more fleeting (Bennett, 2003: 6). Henk Vinken (2005: 155), similarly, posits the existence of an emerging form of youth citizenship which is characterised by 'dynamic identities, open, weak-tie relationships and more fluid, short-lived commitments in informal permeable institutions and associations'. At its extreme end, personalised political activity can manifest in the form of subcultural protest activities by young people to express their political interests (Harris et al., 2010: 13).

Data from my study indeed supported these descriptions, with young Australian Buddhist practitioners showing evidence of engaging with matters of civic and political concern in informal or 'youth-led' ways, by self-identifying problems in society and initiating novel ways to address them. Candice, for example, related how she was working on creating a community garden for Kinglake residents affected by the 2009 Victorian bushfires to address isolation and a lack of support. She related that she was 'still really fuzzy about what that's gonna look like', however it was her way of trying to address 'the ways our society's becoming [un]balanced'. Similarly, Evie related how she had set up a Facebook page for friends to discuss 'existential crises' from a range of faith perspectives, and ways they could be addressed. Evie admitted that it was 'all very idealistic and just like, a space for I dunno, maybe a little bit of complaining', however it did lead to inspiring others and 'encouraging each other to go and do things to help'.

Participants also demonstrated the fleeting nature of their participation, with Tenzin, for example, relating how he co-founded a group for young people of different faith backgrounds to come together and talk to about faith issues in a safe space. As he explained:

What we've really done is, as kind of the spiritual black sheep of our own faith communities, we've created our own community of other people who are

questioning their faith identity. And the sense of belonging on those projects has been really strong. It's been fleeting, because you come and go, and there's no real glue, like we're not practicing together...you know, we don't operate in the same circles. But at those moments, when we come together and go, oh my gosh, you're like me, and we share these same conflicts. The sense of community and belonging at that moment, like on those camps that we've done, or at those workshops has been really good.

Vinken's (2005: 155) characterisation of contemporary youth participation as involving 'open, weak-tie relationships and more fluid, short lived commitments' is also useful for interpreting Tenzin's account of forging a sense of community, illustrating the diverse types of groupings made possible in conditions of detraditionalisation. Vinken (2005) offers a perspective on collaborative youth participation which closely aligns with Maffesoli's (1996) description of neo-tribal groupings of people who are temporarily bound to one another for the sake of sociality, rather than a commitment to a particular ideology. According to Maffesoli (1996: 43), such groupings result in an 'affective warmth' which promotes a sense of 'disindividuation', or loss of a sense of self within a 'collective subject' (Maffesoli, 1988: 145).

The overarching consensus amongst scholars seeking to explain the emergence of such new participatory repertoires is that contemporary youth participation can, and should be located within the body of work which recognises the fragmentation of traditional life-trajectories wrought by the deindustrialisation of the work force, the privatisation of industries and the prevalence of neo-liberal ideology (Bennett, 2003: 5; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007: 2; Harris, Wyn & Younes, 2010: 12). Accordingly, due to the increased risks and unpredictability contemporary social life, young people are more likely to define their own, 'do-it-yourself', individualised civic and political paths. These ideas draw reference from Ulrich Beck & Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and Bauman's (2001) theories of 'individualisation', and Giddens' (1991) work on the construction of the self in modernity.

A number of things can be said about the recognition of alternate forms of participation amongst young people in Western societies as linked to the individualisation thesis. Firstly, an interest in documenting new forms of participatory action amongst young people serves a number of useful functions. As Michele Micheletti (2015: 32) notes, newer forms of political action are often strongly defended as they represent the up-to-date realities of young people and the ways they participate, and help to 'assuage panic about the decay of participatory action'. This is particularly pertinent to marginalised youth, who are often on the receiving end of policies and programs aimed at correcting their so-called civics and citizenship 'deficit', or failure to integrate in Western democracies (Deutsches Jugend Institut, 2003; O'Toole, 2015; Harris & Roose, 2014: 794). The recognition of new, 'youth-led' forms of participatory action amongst youth arguably leads to less stigmatisation of these groups. Individualised forms of citizenship also tie in with broader conceptual shifts towards 'do-it-yourself' (DIY) citizenship amongst contemporary youth, which takes into account the social forces of globalisation, individualisation and conditions of insecurity and risk (Harris & Roose, 2014: 795). The adoption of individualised or 'DIY' forms of participation can be seen as part of this trend, as young people respond to increasingly volatile and unpredictable social conditions. As Micheletti (2015: 31, 46) claims, contemporary participation involves 'self-actualisation, individualized responsibility taking, responsabilisation', with responsabilisation described as a tendency towards individuals more actively undertaking and assuming self governing tasks.

Re-thinking 'DIY' youth participation

While it is useful to note the advantages of a 'DIY' approach to participation, and while the above examples can indeed be considered 'do-it-yourself' (DIY) in the sense that Candice and Evie identified issues affecting society and came up with their own creative solutions, a clear community focus also emerged in discussions with participants about how they perceived social problems, and how they perceived themselves as civic actors. Candice, for example, spoke of the ways she did not see herself as an individual who was isolated from the community she was helping; indeed, she felt as though she was part of the very community she was trying to help.

I don't feel like I'm just trying to be the person who's like, helping others, like I feel like, when I'm, when I'm working, ideally I'm trying to build something that's also, that I'm a part of...you know, it's not just like, you know, me go help the poor people, and here you go. Well they are part of my community and I'm part of their community. That sense of connection.

Evie's creation of a Facebook page and her deliberate involvement of others from different faith perspectives also gave rise to a sense of collaborative problem solving rather than isolated participation. Her efforts reveal a sense of not knowing all the answers herself, and a willingness to explore the creative possibilities of collective vision-sharing. Similar to Candice and Evie, Tenzin also emphasised that the most important outcome of his work was the sense of belonging and community amongst young people of different faith backgrounds, including himself as one of the people who benefitted from the formation of the group. In all three cases, it is useful to note that Candice, Evie and Tenzin did not see themselves as autonomous actors vested with a mandate to fix problems 'out there' in society. While there can be no denying the relevance of individualised forms of participation amongst contemporary youth, data from my study suggests that a Buddhist youth-specific interpretation of individualised participation requires a dual recognition of individual decision-making in youth participatory action, as well as a recognition of 'disindividualised' collective action.

In further support of this interpretation, I suggest that Maffesoli's (1996) concept of 'disindividuation' can also be applied to my study participants' accounts of participation in ethnic Buddhist communities. As Ratto & Boler (2014: 12) argue, 'a more robust account of power relations' in conceptions of DIY citizenship is needed to avoid liberal assumptions about individual agency in democratic societies. This is also important for collective participatory action, as it cannot be assumed that responsibility is shared equally amongst all members of a collective, especially for marginalised youth, who are often subject to acute power differences due to their ethnicity, race, religion, age and socioeconomic status. A preference for collective participation could be seen in several participants' accounts of temple involvement, with participants showing a

willingness to address community issues identified as important by elders at the local temples they attended. Neville, for example, related how his volunteering practice was mainly directed by others at his temple, rather than individually driven: 'I'm not really strict on what I wanna do...it's just whatever's there'. Similarly, Yoshi displayed a willingness to follow the directions of others at his local temple to address issues directly affecting his community, rather than independently seeking volunteering opportunities elsewhere. He noted that any additional volunteering he undertook for Buddhist causes was also influenced by involvement at his local temple:

I would say I wouldn't actively go out and um, and participate in other Buddhist groups because there's already enough to do in [the] temple, but if there is a need for me to go out, I do go out...I would say that it's very ad hoc, so if they need assistance, if a Buddhist group needs assistance, I'm always happy to help out.

As this example shows, temple participation indicated involvement in shared or collective responsibility based on relational ties, directed by elders or monastics at Buddhist temples, and willingly taken up by young people. A preference for collective action based on relational ties has a solid basis in Mahayana Buddhist philosophy and relational practices. In *Good Citizens*, Thich Nhat Hanh (2012: 13, 179-182), a Buddhist monk and peace activist who coined the term 'Engaged Buddhism' (Nhat Hanh, 1967), accounts for the (Mahayana) Buddhist ethics behind such action, maintaining that collective practice has greater potential to alleviate worldly suffering than individual effort alone.

We can use the insights of others...our larger community of practitioners – to share our insight and understand what kind of action can lead to the transformation of that suffering. When we have collective insight, it will help us see the mutually beneficial path that will lead to the cessation of suffering, not only for one person, but for all of us.

In choosing to be a part of Buddhist communities and spending their time contributing the needs of the temple, young Buddhist practitioners willingly partake in a set of relational practices with clearly defined rules and norms guiding conduct. In doing so, they interact with individuals and groups spanning multiple generations to collectively address issues of community concern, whether this is tending to the elderly, helping in the kitchen, setting up the temple for community or charity events, or helping to translate and write documents to facilitate communication across generations or with community and government groups. This preferencing of group, rather than individual needs, may be one example of the significance of collective identities for participation, which as Bakardjieva (2009: 95) notes, has been overlooked in Beck and Giddens' accounts of political participation (O'Toole, 2015: 187-8). These examples suggest that it may be necessary to analyse the civic participation of young Buddhist practitioners by considering alternative perspectives on participation which emphasise collective action and modes of selfhood which align more closely with Buddhist teachings about the self, particularly regarding interdependence (*pratītyasamutpāda*) and no-self (*anattā*).

In addition to inadequately reflecting the participation experiences of young Buddhist practitioners, individualised conceptions of youth participation may also set up unrealistic expectations of contemporary youth, particularly marginalised youth. As Harris (2006: 223) points out, the construction of young people as self-managing citizens only serves to further 'responsibilize' young people, making them accountable for their failure to participate. The valorisation of DIY youth participation as 'proof' of 'successful' participation only further reinforces this notion, failing to take into account vast power differences which may affect the ability of young people to participate, or not participate as individuals.

The findings above help mitigate expectations about the 'responsibilisation' of young people by bringing the whole community into focus, and highlighting the ways individuals from different generations work together to achieve a desired goal. Rather than viewing participation as a process whereby young people are tasked with the responsibility of contributing to an external society (for example, as per definitions of

citizenship participation of 'voting in an election' or 'fundraising for charity'), young people can be recast as interdependent individuals who are part of the society they are contributing to. Acknowledging the mutual impact of one's action on oneself and others, interdependence and collective citizenship based on relational ties offer an alternative way for conceptualising the relationship between individuals and society for participation.

Recently, a number of scholars, activists and artists have acknowledged that contemporary forms of citizenship participation may also involve collective rather than individual forms of action, including collaborative documentary making and the creation of community gardens (Chidgey, 2014; Ratter & Boler, 2014; Rose, 2014). In light of such findings, Bichlbaum & Reilly (in Reilly, 2014: 128) suggest that DIY might better be described as 'do-it-yourself' (plural), in recognition of the large number of people often required to carry out such participatory work. Red Chidgey (2014: 103) notes that some grassroots groups prefer 'DIT' ('do-it-together') in place of DIY, while Mandy Rose (2014: 203) argues that the concept of 'DIWO' (do-it-with-others) better captures the dynamics and importance of collaborative documentary making.

A recognition of collective identities for Buddhist youth citizenship participation enables scholars to reconceptualise the interrelationships between the individual and society such that young Buddhist practitioners are perceived as part of the societies they supposedly contribute to, rather than separate from that society. Indeed, as Ratto & Boler (2014: 12) argue, conceptions of citizenship which privilege a distinct or separate self can be interrogated in light of contemporary understandings of the self, which question whether a coherent notion of the individual even exists (Gergen, 1991). A conceptualisation of citizenship participation amongst young Australian Buddhist practitioners as collective and interdependent resonates with Buddhist philosophy, and enables young Buddhist practitioners to feel part of the Australian society they are contributing to.

It is important to emphasise that according to Buddhist teachings, a recognition of interdependence and collective action does not downplay the integral role of the

individual in effecting social change. From a Buddhist perspective, helping oneself and helping others are seen as interdependent processes, as helping oneself enables one to help others more effectively. Thich Nhat Hanh (2012: 12, 105) has coined the term ‘interbeing’ to describe the way all human beings are interconnected to other beings, and only exist because of other human and non-human elements. Accordingly, individual human actions take on global significance, just as global events have the capacity to affect humans at a personal level. This perspective helps explain how participants in my study also viewed individual transformation as a viable strategy to bring about social change. This is discussed in the next section, along with its significance for theorising Buddhist youth citizenship participation.

Social change as self-transformation

In Chapter 3, I discussed how the Buddhist teaching of *anattā* was a practical teaching intended to help practitioners overcome illusory ideas about the self, which could be harmful to oneself and others. In this regard then, it is not surprising that some participants focused their efforts on trying to overcome their ‘ego’ or separate sense of self, and additionally viewed this as a valid form of civic participation. As Yoshi explained:

I find that when I actually reduce the sense of the ego, to believe that there is no self...I’m more happier, I’m less stressed, and I’m more willing to serve others. So there isn’t that self of actually, um, doing something so that I can benefit for myself, but trying to benefit others so that it benefits others.

The link between individual and social transformation in Buddhism has long been recognised; as Dusana Dorjee (2013: 27-8) notes, Buddhist teachings emphasise the development of one’s highest human potential through the clear path of mind training, in order to alleviate suffering in all its forms. Not surprisingly, several participants in the current study also linked their efforts of social change specifically to the transformation of negative internal states. Tenzin, for example, explained that his adoption of a Mahayana ethics for helping others involved helping himself in order to help others:

You have to help yourself in a sense, so that you can be of benefit to others. So in Mahayana Buddhism...the central goal is, may I reach enlightenment in order to be of benefit to all sentient beings, for all sentient beings. And of that, the second part is the most important, in order to be of benefit to all sentient beings. So then, it's like you work on your own mind, and you're trying to overcome negative emotions and um, practice non-harmfulness, so that you're useful, so that you're not, stuck in the mud. And so that you're actually, yeah, beneficial to others.

Being 'stuck', or 'sinking in the mud' is a well known metaphor in Buddhist philosophy, and has been used to explain the importance of working on oneself first before attempting to help others. In one instance, the Buddha is said to have told one of his novices:

Cunda, that one who is himself sinking in the mud should pull out another who is sinking in the mud is impossible; that one who is not himself sinking in the mud should pull out another who is sinking... (Bodhi, 1995: 130)

From this perspective, it is not only considered desirable to help oneself in order to help others, but necessary in order to be able to help others effectively. These descriptions of citizenship participation can be compared to typical descriptions of citizenship participation, which tend to be 'other' focused, for example, helping a neighbour, giving money to charity, or writing letters to politicians. From a Buddhist perspective, even though such activities are important, they are limited in the extent to which they can transform social problems (Venerable K. Sri Dhammananda, n.d.). Venerable K. Sri Dhammananda (n.d.) observes that from a Buddhist perspective, while involvement in political process is a social reality, the extent to which political systems can improve the welfare of individuals within a society is limited, 'as long as the people in the system are dominated by greed, hatred and delusion'.

Thich Nhat Hanh (2012: 24) further explains that from a Buddhist perspective, personal transformation is important as individuals are not unaffected by suffering when they try to help others. He writes:

When we look at all the suffering around us, at poverty, violence, or climate change, we may want to solve these things immediately...but to do something effectively and ethically, we need to be our best selves in order to be able to handle the suffering.

Thich Nhat Hanh (2012: 36) further elaborates: '...we need to begin with the painful feelings we carry inside us...if they're not dealt with, we may inadvertently cause more suffering when we're trying to relieve it'. The difficulty of handling suffering was illustrated in Faye's account of dealing with disabled people under her care. She related that Buddhism helped her deal with this by helping to overcome her own judgmental feelings and reducing her sense of ego:

...I see a lot of suffering every day in my work. And then...when I go to the monastery, when I listen to the teachings...then it helps me deal with it...it's kind of like, okay, I can go back the next day and do it again...like so much of Buddhism is just about like, letting go from your own ego, and just being present to whatever's in front of you, like what's going on in the exact present moment, and that's really helpful in my work as well...it's like, this is not about me and my judgment of this person. You've just gotta let go of your judgments and just be with that person, what is gonna make a difference in your day to day, and what's gonna empower you and help you feel more independent and uphold your rights today...so yeah, there's those sort of teachings and things that kind of co-support each other.

For Faye, helping people who were disabled involved being able to overcome her own feelings of suffering, which had the potential to harm both herself and those under her care. It is easy to see how a judgmental attitude could cause more suffering in Faye's case, as described above, even if she was engaged in the activity of 'helping the

disabled'. Similarly, Tenzin noted how many not-for-profit organisations he knew of were 'riddled with the same problems that politics is riddled with, like ego, and power, and money, and all that', illustrating how personal weaknesses had the capacity to cause damage to otherwise well-intentioned causes and groups. From a Buddhist perspective, being able to help others effectively is more than a series of actions such as fundraising for charity, signing a petition or protesting against logging; reflecting and being aware of one's own mind, emotions and how these might also help or hinder the situation is equally, if not more important.

The accounts above provide a realistic glimpse of the human challenges involved in helping others, and add a new dimension to conceptualizing citizenship participation by recognizing the emotional work young people undertake as a valid aspect of citizenship participation. These findings align with Elias's (1978) focus on perceiving individuals as 'processes'; his linking of psychological development (what he called *psychogenesis*) with social development (*sociogenesis*) also helps account for participants' emphasis on self-transformation as a form of participation (Loyal & Quilley, 2004: 3; Van Krieken, 1998: 3, 6). It is useful to note here that while many sociologists have posited theories apparently bridging the gap between the individual and society, or agency and structure since the 1980s (Ritzer, 2011: 499-500), most typically steer clear of dealing with the psychological realm, preferring to focus instead on observable action (Van Krieken, 1998: 45;). Giddens (1991: 32) for example writes:

Changes in intimate aspects of personal life...are directly tied to the establishment of social connections of very wide scope...for the first time in human history, 'self' and 'society' are interrelated in a global milieu.

However it is useful to note the ways Giddens' perspective on social change differs to that offered by Elias. While Giddens (1984: 3) accords individuals with great agency and power to make a difference, he avoids entering into the subjective realm of analysing the purposeful transformation of internal states such as anger, greed or happiness, and the potential impact of this on the social world. Indeed, Giddens (1984: 3) warns that terms such as 'purpose', 'intention', 'reason' and 'motive' need

to be used with caution, as they have the capacity to 'extricate human action from the contextuality of time-space'. Instead, Giddens maintains that individual reflexivity should be perceived as 'the continuous monitoring of observable (emphasis added) action which human beings display and expect others to display'. Elias (1994), by contrast, was critical of the study of 'disembodied actions', preferring to study the impact of psychological formations on social processes (Van Krieken, 1998: 44). As discussed earlier, young Australian Buddhist practitioners' discussions of self-transformation and the emotional regulation involved in citizenship participation suggests that a symbiosis between the psychological and social realm is of useful consideration in studies of youth participation.

While the recognition of individual emotional work may add a new dimension to the conceptualisation of youth participation, it is also necessary to recognise the potential limitations of this approach if individuals avoid direct engagement with social and political institutions. This is particularly pertinent to addressing issues involving broader structural oppression, such as issues of gender, race and ethnic inequality, or religious discrimination, where a micro-level or grassroots approach may produce limited results. Micheletti (2015: 45) for example asks whether newer, elite-challenging types of participation can adequately address global problems if it leads to 'groupness' and 'negative exclusion', using the example of not eating meat to address climate change. She argues that a potential values divide might result between people who engage in newer forms of political participation and those who do not, potentially leading to a future where large numbers of people opt out of democratic processes:

The basic point is that it is important for democratic society's future that groups of individuals with certain value profiles do not get put off from voting...otherwise a dangerous divide might develop that not only lead to worrisome mobilisations of bias but that also threatens the legitimacy of representative democracy as a form of governance and, therefore, the democratic underpinnings of society.

Many participants in my study did express a preference for individual transformation. This had the potential to result in a reluctance to engage with formal, collectivised political processes, and to unite with other Buddhist practitioners for political representation. While this meant that young Australian Buddhist practitioners were limited in their ability to act as a unified political force, it also displayed a respect for internal differences within the Buddhist community, suggesting the presence of strong relational ties between members of the Buddhist community.

Political participation

Although many participants held strong views on equality, injustice, welfare, marriage equality, indigenous rights, caring for the environment, multiculturalism and supporting asylum seekers (Aurora, Ben, Candice, Evie, Rupal, Tenzin), they were less enthusiastic about pursuing these causes via formal political participation. Beth, for example, argued that politics is ‘all talk’, in contrast to transformation via spiritual development:

If we’re too focused on external things like politics and, it can start to get this talk, all talk and all, even action, but it’s not about actually looking inwards and developing the mind and the heart through meditation. So, I think that’s more important.

Many participants in the study had a negative view of politics due to the political instability in Australia, exemplified by the ascension and demise of five prime ministers over the course of six years from 2010 to 2015, the perceived lack of credible choices and the compulsory nature of voting. Six participants (Evie, Kieu, Maria, Neville, Yen, Yoshi) said they voted only because they felt as though they had no choice, and that they would receive a fine if they didn’t, while three participants (Maria, Kieu, Yoshi) felt as though their vote ultimately made no difference to the outcome. Maria for example joked: ‘This sounds really stupid...I felt like karma was gonna play its part anyway, like whatever person had the more merit would win, regardless of my vote’.

For other participants, diasporic ties and socio-political events shaped their perceptions about religion and political involvement. For two Vietnamese Buddhist participants, Neville and Terry, a negative perception of the relationship between religion and politics was likely due to socio-political conflict in Vietnam, which also affected the Vietnamese diaspora in Australia. Terry, for example, maintained that politics could be a source for conflict within the Australian Buddhist community, while Neville stated: 'I just find that once religion gets...tied to politics, it gets very complicated, it gets very corrupt...those two should never be mixed'. As Nino Bucci (2016) reports, tensions have simmered within the Australian Vietnamese diaspora about whether Vietnamese refugees should unite to reclaim Vietnam from the Communists since at least the 1980s, with the Buddhist community in particular affected due to the repression of Buddhism in Vietnam following the implementation of Communism in the 1970s, and the exodus of many South Vietnamese to countries including Australia, the United States and France. Ellen, too, linked political differences to conflict within Buddhist communities, saying: 'Within any community, you're always gonna get diversity, different political views, so it might be a bit difficult for a Buddhist group to be involved in...party political activities, because it might be quite divisive in terms of who is in that group and what they personally believe.' Fabian and Maria felt that political involvement might be important on an individual level, however the linking of Buddhist groups to a political stance had the potential to create a negative impression for those who did not agree with the stance adopted by Buddhist groups.

Similarly, Rupal, a Sri Lankan-Australian Buddhist, did not agree with the ideological stance proffered by Bodu Bala Sena, a government-endorsed, Buddhist nationalist movement in Sri-Lanka, and gave this as his reason for not adopting the version of Buddhism practiced by his parents. Bodu Bala Sena has instigated numerous anti-Muslim protests and attacks since 2012, drawing condemnation from Buddhist leaders internationally. However the organization has largely escaped criticism from the Sri Lankan government, serving as a vivid example of the consequences of aligning Buddhism with politics.

Two participants (Tenzin, Yoshi) had a slightly more conciliatory view, expressing disaffection about the Australian political system yet remarking that they still felt lucky for having the opportunity to vote. When asked if it was important for him to vote in an Australian election, Tenzin summarised his mixed feelings by saying:

Yes...although actually...I'm kind of a bit disaffected by politics, to be honest with you....I don't see many good choices in terms of political parties to vote for...we live pretty much in a two party system unfortunately, and getting to vote every three years, I don't think is a really effective tool. And...for example, like Tony Abbott, he said he wasn't going to change taxes and yet here he's come and he's just totally, with this new budget, just totally destroyed a whole lot of social services that I care about. And to me that just says politicians will say whatever they want and then go ahead...and do whatever they want. So, and I think maybe this is a reflection of our generation, is a lot of people our age look at politics and they kinda go, it doesn't really matter who I vote for...and also, I've see a lot of really good things happening in terms of activism out on the edges...and people doing really good things, and able to create change, and little not-for-profits...and I think far more change happens there, than getting behind a political party. But I'm glad we live in a democracy still, as opposed to some other system.

As Tenzin suggested, while participants were generally not hopeful about being able to address social issues through formal political participation, they did not necessarily rule out attempts to change or challenge social structures. For example, while Evie claimed that 'politics...it's stupid', she argued that spiritual development and socio-political involvement should not be considered as two conflicting aims; rather, both were necessary for the alleviation of suffering for those living a worldly existence:

I think a lot of it can be taught or perceived as just being, you know, kind of saving yourself. But yeah, I've certainly found that so much of my growth has been due to social support and a lot of my suffering has come from socio-political problems. And likewise for others. So I think it's...kind of comes back

to like, duality and non-duality. Like yes, it's important for us as individuals to practice you know, cultivating non-dual awareness, but it's also important for us to address, like, suffering and promoting happiness in this dual world.

Ben, too, recognised that a lot of suffering was 'systemic', and offered an approach to Buddhist political involvement which took into account both the internal diversity with Buddhist groups as well as Buddhist teachings on compassion, impermanence and non-violence:

It's hard to know if Buddhism should in this day and age be political...I think it's a little bit biased, but when you put the motivations of others before you, and before economic stimulus, and your motivation is pure, then I think you should take political action. I think Buddhist could protest peacefully...and knowing that the target of the protest is not solid, and they're also worthy of compassion 'cause they're deluded...and through compassion you can protest...But to pull Buddhism in and say that there is one Buddhist [who] represents this, it's pretty problematic as well. Yeah. There's no collective, there's no centralised one individual.

Ben thus offers a view which is not antagonistic towards political involvement. He also touches on a valid concern – that no single Buddhist leader has been able to unite Buddhists practicing different traditions towards a Buddhist ethic regarding political engagement. While the Dalai Lama (1993) has expressed an admiration for modern 'secular democracy', praising India for sharing its democratic freedom with exiled Tibetans, his views are not shared by all Buddhist majority nations. As a constitutional monarchy, Buddhist majority Bhutan has exiled approximately 100,000 Nepali Bhutanese since the mid 1980s (Shrestha, 2015). Other Buddhist majority nations, including Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, have also been marked by attempts to instil Buddhist nationalism, contributing to conflict between Buddhists and ethnic and religious minorities in these countries.

In Australia, Buddhist practitioners have adopted a range of Buddhist traditions, highlighting the difficulty of uniting Buddhist groups towards political representation. A 'Buddhist representative' in Australian politics, let alone an Australian Buddhist political party, remains unlikely at this point in time, due to the internal diversity of Buddhism in Australia and the lack of a unified Buddhist political core. As Victor observed, Buddhist activities in Australia were:

all very fuzzy and casual...an expression of the personal effort of each individual that's part of the community, and they contribute at a level that they are capable... as prompted by the level that the institutions offer.

Victor saw Buddhist activity in Australia as necessarily limited by a lack of 'institutionalisation, governance...formalised, ritualised...practice', comparing Buddhism to the 'institutionalised might' of Christianity and Judaism in Australia. This observation is supported by studies of Buddhist ecumenism in Australia, which have been shown to be historically limited (Bucknell, 1992). For many years, the Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils was not recognised as the peak body representing Buddhists in Australia (Cousens, 2011: 157). Although this is no longer the case, the lack of a unified Buddhist core in Australia perhaps explains why the politically engaged participants in my study mainly pursued political participation in an individual capacity. As Fabian argued, political participation was definitely important at an individual level, even if it had the potential to cause problems at a group level. He said:

On a like collective level of whether it's a community or group getting involved, I think that's probably trickier. Because then you're...connecting the group with a political stance and it might...influence...how others related to the community, Buddhist community. But individually I think it's important for me. Because...what you do has an effect on the world...it's a positive thing to do...try to influence the world for the better.

Candice also spoke about the individual effort she undertook to vote during the federal election, explaining how she visited all the websites of the major political parties and copied and pasted all the information that was relevant to her decision, before deciding which party to vote for. Winona related how she signed many online petitions, handed out score cards and donated money to GetUp!²¹, emailed candidates about her concerns before election time, and successfully lobbied for funding for her local council regarding an issue that was important to her. Winona stated that 'the government's there to serve us, and we have to tell them what we want', underscoring the importance of individual political involvement in democratic societies.

It appears then that a number of participants did see the importance of engaging in formal democratic processes, but as individuals rather than as representatives of Buddhist communities. These findings echo those of Ruth Fitzpatrick in her study of social engagement amongst Australian Tibetan Buddhist practitioners. As Fitzpatrick (2014: 100) writes:

Though participants said they were not against individual Buddhists being involved in Buddhist social engagement, the majority of participants expressed resistance toward individuals or groups carrying out forms of advocacy as Buddhists or as an explicitly Buddhist project.

Fitzpatrick (2014: 100) also found that the majority (77%) of participants in her study were opposed to 'the idea of a "Buddhist" point of view on contemporary social issues being articulated in the media and public forums'. She suggests that a desire amongst her study participants to keep religiously-informed social engagement an 'individual' and 'private matter' amongst Australians practicing Tibetan Buddhism denotes 'a desire to conceal or distance a Buddhist identity from social engagement', without necessarily condemning it (Fitzpatrick, 2014: 100-1). These findings, along with those

²¹ An Australian progressive activist group which aims to involve everyday Australians in political action and keep governments accountable.

from my own study as described above, suggest a wariness amongst young Australian Buddhist practitioners, and indeed, potentially Australian Buddhist practitioners in general about any claims of representativeness made by Australian Buddhist groups.

This preference is noteworthy, given that the Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils (FABC) – the peak body representing Buddhism in Australia – has become increasingly vocal on social matters such as climate change, greyhound racing, same-sex marriage, and proposals to abolish Australia's Racial Discrimination Act (18C), by issuing statements via the 'News' section of its website (FABC, 2015). It is unclear at this stage how widely the positions adopted by the FABC are accepted amongst Buddhist practitioners in Australia, including young Buddhist practitioners. Indeed, it appears that political involvement amongst young Buddhist practitioners in Australia is shaped by a long history of plurality amongst Buddhist practitioners in Australia (Barker & Rocha, 2011: 11), with young Australian Buddhist practitioners largely bypassing Buddhist organisations and peak bodies, and forming their views on political participation based on their experiences in the prevailing Australian political context. Civic participation amongst young Australian Buddhist practitioners appears to be more collectivised, involving either existing or newly formed groups, however this also largely lacks central coordination or planning amongst different Buddhist traditions. While the Buddhist Council of Victoria (BCV) runs three main service programs, namely, the Religious Instruction in primary schools program, the healthcare chaplain program and the prison chaplain program, only one of the participants interviewed (Yen) sought out volunteering experience from the BCV in the religious instruction program – this, too, arose from discussions at her local temple.

While the plurality of Buddhist traditions in Australia appears to have shaped Buddhist youth citizenship participation, it would be misleading to regard young Australian Buddhist practitioners simply as individuals working in isolation, without consideration for others in the Buddhist community. Indeed, a reluctance to unite politically indicates a respect for differences within the Buddhist community, and an understanding of the potential for political involvement to lead to conflict within the Buddhist community. This would appear to indicate a concern for the stable

functioning of the Buddhist community as a whole, and an awareness of the impact of one section of the Buddhist community on the rest, perhaps suggesting the presence of stronger relational ties than otherwise suggested by Buddhism's lack of centralisation in Australia. Indeed, Fitzpatrick & Mendelson's (2013: 4) suggest that a preference for 'expressly communal and political forms of social engagement' amongst Australian Tibetan Buddhist practitioners reflects 'the experience or practice of selflessness (*anātman*, *śūnyatā*)'. These findings align with Elias's (1978; 1994) emphasis on interdependencies and the relational ties between individuals. This view also challenges the responsibilisation of youth in discussions of youth participation, which as mentioned earlier, perpetuate the idea that young people are solely responsible for solving problems in society.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that civic and political participation was important to young Australian Buddhist practitioners, who took an active interest in helping others and giving back to society as capable and well-informed citizens. I argue in the case of young Australian Buddhist practitioners, an increasing recognition and defence of emergent, informal or 'DIY' participation amongst young people as proof of participation, as linked to discourses about modernity and the individual construction of identities, would be complemented by the ideas of Elias (1978; 1994) and Maffesoli (1996) on the interaction between the individual and society. On one hand, many participants from my study focused on self-transformation as a viable pathway to participation, demonstrating individual responsibility and a commitment to working on the 'self' in their participation efforts. Ironically, however, and in accordance with Buddhist philosophy, the purpose of working on the self was to dissolve notions of the self in order to be of benefit to others. Participants also provided examples of working with others in order to effect social change, either as members of multigenerational ethnic Buddhist communities, or as participants in more dynamic, fleeting groupings, which Michel Maffesoli (1996) describes using the notion of 'neo-tribal sociality' (Sweetman, 2004: 80). Of note, according to Maffesoli (1988: 145), is the dissolution of the self in such groupings, which he terms 'disindividuation', in contrast to Beck & Beck Gernsheim's (2002) work on 'individualisation' and the construction of individual

identity. These examples demonstrate the sociality of young Australian Buddhist practitioners in their participation efforts, and the need to pay attention to collective forms of participation which may not be sufficiently represented by referring only the individualised, DIY participation thesis. I argue that a dual focus on both processes of self-transformation and 'disindividualised' collaborative action is useful for conceptualising the participation experiences of young Australian Buddhist practitioners.

While participants were more likely to be civically engaged, and less likely to be politically engaged, at least as 'Buddhists', in both cases their choices reflected an awareness and appreciation of Buddhist teachings. In the Literature Review and Theoretical Framework chapters, I suggested that recent work on youth religiosity draws attention to the importance of recognising the religious teachings which inform ethical frameworks for living amongst religious youth. The findings in this chapter on Participation confirm that an understanding of Buddhist teachings did play an integral role in the formation of an ethical approach to Buddhist youth participation.

These findings challenge statements about the lack of civic engagement amongst religious youth in Australia. Even when participation was framed as a process of working on oneself, it was clear that the intention in doing so was for the betterment of society. They also support interpretations of individualisation which suggest that it can have altruistic aims and intents (Berger & Ezzy, 2007; Taylor, 1992; Collins-Mayo & Dandelion, 2010). In the next chapter, I conclude with a summary of the major findings of my study regarding Australian Buddhist youth identity, belonging and citizenship, and comment on the theoretical implications of these findings.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to investigate emerging forms of religious identity negotiation which take into account findings from recent studies regarding the fluid, contextualised and depoliticised nature of youth religious identity, and to develop a theoretical model for conceptualising such religious identity negotiations. As I have argued, the current lack (to my knowledge) of such a theoretical model has necessitated further research along these lines, to provide greater conceptual depth to these descriptions of religious identity, and to investigate how these descriptions sit alongside, and contrast with existing conceptions of youth religious identity.

To this end, I have investigated the religious identity negotiations of young Buddhist practitioners in contemporary Australia. I have done so by analysing the unique religious biographies of twenty-two young people whose lives have been transformed by an ancient tradition which has spread across ever-diverse locales. This thesis has shown how an attentiveness to the process of moving in and out of the social contexts where Buddhism has spread, and beyond, helps shed further light on the multidirectionality, fluidity, contextualisation and ephemerality of youth religious identity. It has shown how young Buddhist practitioners emphasised these very characteristics in their religious identity negotiations, and how a study of their religious identity negotiations thus enables the development of a new theory of religious identity negotiation which recognises these characteristics. This theory draws on the work of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), Bauman (2001; 2004) Giddens (1991), Maffesoli (1996) and Elias (1978; 1991; 1994), in particular, their theories of individualisation (Bauman, 2001; 2004; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1991), disindividuation, neo-tribalism (Maffesoli, 1996), processualism (Elias, 1978), human interdependence (Elias, 1978), and the connection between personal and social development (Elias, 1991; 1994).

This thesis has focused on re-thinking three key areas of investigation in relation to youth religious identity: socialisation, belonging and participation. Regarding

socialisation, participants were clearly aware of the multiplicity of Buddhist socialising influences, and that they were required to make choices regarding which Buddhist socialising influences to engage with, and the ways to engage with them. They did this alongside negotiating other life priorities such as education, employment and relationships. In effect, they took responsibility for negotiating Buddhist identity within the unique contexts of their lives. Participants' awareness of the ways they negotiated Buddhist identity alongside other life priorities also demonstrated their awareness of the fluidity of religious identity, as their perceptions about the 'importance' of Buddhism changed at different points in their lives.

Regarding belonging, participants expressed no desire to construct defensive ethno-religious identities, despite experiencing the negative effects of national social norms regarding religion, such as anti-religious sentiment and White, Judeo-Christian privilege. The work done by participants to experience a sense of belonging – continually gauging others' interest or acceptance of religion, and presenting a version of religiosity deemed compatible with others' interests – demonstrates a commitment to sociality and mutual understanding over a minoritised identity politics. Similarly, a stance of 'cosmopolitan irony' – distancing from one's own religion in contexts of religious diversity – reveals a concern for social harmony over and above robust expressions of Buddhist identity.

Regarding civic and political participation, young Australian Buddhist practitioners were keen to emphasise interdependence over discrete and autonomous conceptions of the self. This was illustrated in three ways: disrupting the self/society bifurcation, disindividuation of the self in communities, and distancing from identity politics. Participants' descriptions of participation made clear that they disliked the idea of a separate self helping others in society; participants preferred to think of themselves as part of the community they were helping. Participants also preferred to view participation in terms of collective, rather than individual responsibility and action. Politically, participants in my study expressed little desire to unite ideologically and to drive a distinct Buddhist political agenda. This emphasised the perceived value of

diversity within the Buddhist community, and a commitment to forging links over identity politics.

In summary then, while young Australian Buddhist practitioners faced a number of challenges relating to socialisation, belonging and participation, they did not respond to these challenges by adopting homogenised, minoritised or defensive religious identities. In fact, they did the opposite, emphasising commonalities and speaking about the perceived disadvantages of separation and identity politics. Findings from my study suggest that young Australian Buddhist practitioners emphasise the mutual co-construction of religious identities, and that this process involves self-monitoring and transformation in relation to others, reflecting an interaction between individual psychological processes and macro level social processes, or, in Elias's terms, an interaction between 'psychogenesis' and 'sociogenesis' (Loyal & Quilley, 2004: 3, 19). In the case of young Australian Buddhist practitioners, it appears that the desire to enhance belonging and sociality, and to develop understanding and compassion towards others, has driven young Australian Buddhist practitioners' reflexive self-monitoring and their social positionings in contexts of diversity.

I further contend that Michel Maffesoli's (1996) concepts of 'tribalism' and 'disindividuation' add conceptual clarity to the religious identity negotiations of young Australian Buddhist practitioners. Maffesoli's (1996: 10-11) emphasis on the ways individuals are called upon to play a role or 'persona' within a tribe, and his assertion that the individual or persona 'can only find fulfilment in his relation to others', places an emphasis on 'emphatic sociality' rather than rational individualism, helping account for the fact that participants emphasised social harmony and interconnectedness over the expression of individual religious identity, and did not necessarily feel the desire to develop a distinct religious self.

However, while these ideas are applicable to my findings, disindividuation does not fully capture the process of purposefully working on the self to reduce one's sense of self; rather, disindividuation or the loss of self in a 'collective subject' is described as an intense, yet temporal phenomenon, even if sociality is the aim (Maffesoli, 1988:

145; Maffesoli, 1996; 43). Thus, given that the religious identity negotiation experiences of my participants were reflective of aspects of both individualisation and disindividuation, the term I adopt in this thesis – *disindividualisation* – is a selective amalgam of these two concepts. In relation to young Australian Buddhist practitioners, I argue that a form of religious disindividualisation guides and shapes their religious identity negotiations, and that disindividualisation, as adopted by young Australian Buddhist practitioners, is crucially informed by religious as well as contextual factors. These include Buddhist doctrines regarding the self and relational practices, perceptions about the role of religion in society, and an awareness of national norms regarding the expression of religion.

This thesis does not seek to replace or supercede other conceptualisations of religious identity; nor does it contend that disindividualisation describes the religious identity negotiations of the majority of young people in Australia. In fact, it is expected that individuals will continue to adopt different ways to deal with majority-minority conflict, national norms regarding religion, globalisation and secularisation. Individuals with strong diasporic ties to countries where Buddhist nationalism is promoted may adopt defensive religious identities – indeed, one participant from this study mentioned that he had friends who felt it was important for Buddhists to fight against Muslim violence in their country of origin. For whatever reasons, such individuals chose not to participate in this study. It may be the case that religious disindividualisation aptly describes the religious identity negotiations of many young Australian Buddhist practitioners, and potentially other religious youth in Australia and other countries, but this is not possible to tell from the limited data collected for this study of 22 young Australian Buddhist practitioners. This thesis also does not contend that the adoption of religious disindividualisation is ideal in all places and at all times. Indeed, promoting a conscious withdrawal of religious identity and practice from public life may further entrench anti-religious sentiment and religious illiteracy, and promoting self-transformation ahead of other forms of civic and political action such as protest, lobbying and engagement with government and political groups has the potential to leave structural oppression and privilege unaddressed.

Although the scope of this thesis has been limited, it is hoped that the ideas developed here will begin the process of introducing the concept of religious disindividualisation into the academic literature on youth religiosity, and provide a point of contrast to existing conceptualisations of youth religious identity. I have suggested that religious disindividualisation represents an attempt to actualise Buddhist teaching to negotiate religious identity in such a way that recognises the interdependencies between the self and others. It puts religious practice front and centre in the lives of young Australian Buddhist practitioners and those they interact with, yet paradoxically, will be largely invisible to a non-academic audience due to the conscious withdrawal of religious identification in contexts of cultural and religious diversity. A number of questions can be raised. Given the current anti-religious sentiment in Australia, is religious disindividualisation potentially applicable to other religious youth? Does its relative invisibility make Australian society seem less religious than it really is? Is it even necessarily possible, or desirable, to recognise religious disindividualisation? In many ways, the young Australian Buddhist practitioners in my study seemed to prefer religious invisibility and depoliticisation over outward expressions of religiosity. Respecting their wishes will be an integral part of 'recognising' the role of Buddhism in Australia, albeit in a less familiar form.

Finally, while this thesis focuses on young Australian Buddhist practitioners, in many ways, it develops a theory for conceptualising youth religious identity which critiques and builds upon the strengths and weaknesses of existing approaches and recent writing about religiosity amongst young people from a number of religions. To this end, it is possible that disindividualisation may account for a tendency to remain religiously indistinct in conditions of diversity amongst other religious youth, especially in contexts of religious diversity, where no one religion has dominance over other religions or spiritualities and robust, public expressions of religiosity are avoided. It may help account for a refusal (as shown in Hopkins' (2011) and Noble's (2008) work on Muslims in Australia) to develop monolithic religious identities, particularly amongst young people who recognise the ways their religious identities may be expressed differently or not at all according to the social context. It may be that concepts of non-self, impermanence, interdependence, emptiness and personal

responsibility have particular significance to young Buddhist practitioners in their religious identity negotiations, however it is possible that some of these concepts also find expression in the religious identity negotiations of young people practicing other religions, albeit perhaps with different doctrinal endorsements depending on the religion. Further research may reveal the national contexts in which religious disindividualisation may be more prevalent, and help determine the extent to which both religion and context may contribute to a disindividualised approach to religiosity.

While there is ample evidence to show that Buddhism is having an indelible impact on the lives of young Australians, and that young Buddhist practitioners themselves are engaging non-Buddhist practitioners in Buddhist ideas and practices, it is likely that the influence of Buddhism on Australian cultural life remains unrecognisable to many of those who are not familiar with Buddhism. Much like the base of an iceberg, the extent to which Buddhism has influenced Australian cultural life remains obscured in the depths of an ocean of religious illiteracy, anti-religious sentiment, and the concealment of Buddhism by young people themselves. Time will tell whether these oceans warm, and Buddhism melts into the vast expanse of Australian cultural life, and beyond.

Appendix 1: Participant Profiles

Anh

Anh is an 18 year-old high school student who comes from a family of Vietnamese Buddhists. She recalls spending most of her childhood at the temple, a place where she learnt her morals and values. Anh observes that Buddhism has acted as a bridge between Vietnamese and Australian culture, teaching her to be grateful for her parents' unconditional love, and understanding of the cultural barriers they experienced when they arrived in Australia. Her mother also facilitated her learning about Buddhism by taking her to Vietnamese school from a young age, which has allowed her to understand Buddhism 'more in depth'. Anh relates that she often has conversations with her mother about Buddhism, and that they both listen to and understand each other. However she says there are differences in the way she and her mother practice. Anh sees Buddhism as an 'education', as 'there are so many things about Buddhism that you can take out and apply' in life. She explains this is different to her mother, who sees Buddhism as a 'religion' and focuses more on ethno-cultural rituals. Anh describes the temple as a second 'home', where she goes to experience peace and quiet, and 'just be myself'. She also went on an interstate retreat without her parents a few years back, saying she liked the sense of independence this gave her. Anh enjoys teaching a children's class at the temple on weekends, and often travels there on her own using public transport. She describes this as a way of bringing forth Buddhism in Australia, and 'giving back' to the next generation what she experienced when she was younger.

Ben

Ben is a 22 year-old Australian-born Buddhist practitioner of Scottish heritage. He became interested in Buddhism during his final years of high school, via a philosophical inquiry of 'Celtic civilisation into the Indus Valley, into Buddhism'. After finishing high school, Ben's interest in Buddhism led him to move to India to live for six months in a Buddhist monastery, where he 'really managed to get a connection with the living tradition of Buddhism, rather than just published literature'. It was during his time in India that Ben decided to formally call himself a Buddhist, take refuge vows

and adopt a set of instructions from his teachers. Although Ben has since moved back to Australia to commence an undergraduate degree, he tries to practice 'as traditionally as possible'. This has involved making alterations to his appearance, and travelling to India frequently to be in contact with his teachers. Ben is highly committed to his religious path; he works at a patisserie on the weekends to cover the cost of his flights to India, while living at home with his parents. He also runs a charity to raise funds for girls' education in India, describing this as part of his feminist influence. Ben notes that Buddhism is usually met with 'less hostility' than other religions due to the influence of the Dalai Lama, and positive representations of Buddhism in popular culture. He generally does not have a problem telling other people he is Buddhist, although he relates that people often question his Buddhist commitment on account of his race, asking if he is 'Eurasian'. Regarding religious identity, Ben asserts, 'ultimately, by putting the term Buddhist there, it can be useful. But if you use it in a way to separate yourself from others, you're doing the opposite of its intention. You're not trying to separate yourself from other people. You're really trying to find the shared humanity'. Ben also believes it is important to 'at some stage recognise that's a label', and to recognise that 'self is flexible, self is not established'. He finds that changes due to 'modernity' have been helpful for facilitating his communication with lamas and other supportive people overseas through emails, social media and formal letters. Ben believes it can be useful for Buddhists to become politically involved, if their intentions are 'pure', as many problems are 'systemic'. However he believes that it is difficult for Buddhists to unite over political causes due to Buddhism's lack of centralisation.

Beth

Beth is a 26 year-old psychology student who describes her ethnicity as Australian. She initially became interested in Buddhism during high school when a Buddhist monk visiting from overseas ran a meditation class at her parent's house. Beth was 'really struck by his sense of calm and presence', describing it as something she had 'never really seen before'. Following the class, Beth stayed in contact with the monk while he was in Australia. Beth's interest in Buddhism solidified when she finished her

undergraduate degree and decided to spend a month at the monk's forest monastery overseas, meditating for up to 16 hours a day. During this time, her concerned mother visited her. Upon returning to Melbourne, Beth tried to integrate her Buddhist practice into everyday life, shaving her head, giving away all her possessions and quitting her honours degree. Additionally, Beth started rejecting her own culture and learning to speak Sinhalese. Despite this, Beth reported feeling that she didn't fit into the Buddhist community she attended, as she did not share the same cultural background of being brought up as a Buddhist. Beth now reflects on her efforts to embrace Buddhism back then as 'a little bit extreme', causing 'big fights' with her mother. Beth believes she has come to a compromise by returning to study psychology. As she relates, psychology has been a way to bring Buddhism into her culture as a Westerner, and to integrate 'two things that were very much at odds and causing fighting before'. She claims this shift occurred as a result of her mother visiting her while she was overseas and becoming more accepting of her interest in Buddhism. This in turn made Beth more accepting of her mother's point of view. Beth also notes the impact of a monk working as a clinical psychologist, who showed her a way to make Buddhism relevant and acceptable to Australians.

Bob

Bob is a 26 year-old academic who describes himself as a White Australian. He first became aware of Buddhism when his mother bought him a book about Buddhism when he was 14 years-old. He claims the book resonated with him as he was becoming interested in Chinese culture at the time. His interest in Buddhism was further fuelled when he was 16 and joined a Tai Chi club. This brought him into contact with Western Buddhist practitioners, who ignited his interest in Buddhism as a living practice. During his VCE years he experienced a period of atheism, rejected religion entirely. However during his third year of university, one of his friends became involved in a Buddhist club and invited him to club events. At the same time he became involved in martial arts again, and Buddhism started heavily influencing his life once more. Bob says he tries to apply 'the Buddhist system of ethics' in his everyday life as much as he can, as it provides 'a step-by-step program' to 'live your life rightly'. At the time of interviewing, Bob defined himself in a religious sense as

'Buddhist-slash-questioning', and mentioned circling 'Agnostic' in the latest Australian Census. He feels uncomfortable labelling himself as 'Buddhist with a capital B' as he does not attend a temple. However he chooses to identify himself 'strategically' as a Buddhist to his Christian partner and close friends in order to participate in religious discussions with them. Bob observes that his ties to Buddhism are in a constant state of flux, and that he feels 'a little bit more Buddhist' in Asia as there are many nearby shrines he can easily go to at any time. Bob has a collection of religious gifts in his house, which include a hand calligraphied bible verse given to him by his partner, an icon of the Virgin Mary, and two statues of the Buddha, which he stresses are 'in the centre'. He muses that he received his first Buddha statue as a Christmas gift, and his second Buddha statue from his Christian partner, who also gave him the icon of the Virgin Mary.

Candice

Candice is a 25 year-old student and volunteer who is also working part time. She has lived in Australia for most of her life, and describes her ethnicity as 'probably Caucasian'. She first became interested in Buddhism through her interest in psychology, and 'how the mind works'. She relates that she also started 'really seriously meditating' when a visiting teacher at her university began a group on campus. She 'got quite deeply into it' for a few years, although she didn't initially call herself a Buddhist. 'I just said I was interested in it', she recalls. Over time, Candice felt it was 'more honest' to call herself a Buddhist, as she was committed to Buddhism and practicing it. However she believes the term 'Buddhist' has the capacity to create divisions between people, as it indicates a particular lifestyle preference which might differ to that of others. Candice relates that when she began identifying herself as a Buddhist, she noticed that it was more difficult to have open conversations with her family members who were either Christian or Atheist. Candice has found it easiest to talk to people who are 'kind of like spiritual themselves but in a sort of very open way'. She finds that people with a theistic background have trouble understanding Buddhism, as well as people who are more 'secular'. Candice believes that while the term 'secular' is basically a separation between government and religious institutions, more recently it has become more about ignoring the value of spirituality, and

becoming 'distanced from that realm of life within our public discourse'. She believes there should be a 'happy medium' between having 'one religion dominating' and not talking at all about religion or spirituality. Candice identifies drinking (alcohol) and meat eating culture as aspects of Australian culture that make it more challenging to practice Buddhism in Australia. She deals with these in a 'flexible' way, for example, by bringing a vegetarian dish to someone's house for dinner, or by offering to be the designated driver when friends drink alcohol. She jokes that this allows her to 'get out of it in a really cowardly way'. Candice is politically engaged in the sense that she researches political groups thoroughly before each election and ranks each group according to their policies. She is also involved in multifaith activities, and was helping to set up a community garden at the time of interviewing. Candice notes that she is not simply trying to help others, but also trying to fulfil a need for community herself. She relates that she has had many experiences which have blurred the boundary between herself and others, and that she can relate to Buddhist teachings about the self because of this.

Ellen

Ellen is a 28 year-old psychology student who is currently working and volunteering in the community sector. She identifies as an Anglo/European Australia. Ellen first became interested in Buddhism in her mid-teens, after reading a book and seeing a television documentary about Buddhism. She began reading whatever she could find about Buddhism and trying to meditate on her own, 'with probably limited success at the time'. After a year or so of reading, she ended up confused and decided that Buddhism might not be what she thought it was. She also found it difficult to pursue Buddhism as she didn't know anyone else who was Buddhist at the time. Over the past five years, however, Ellen has returned to Buddhist meditation at a Buddhist centre. She feels that being part of a community and being able to hear other people's perspectives has finally helped her make sense of Buddhist teachings. Ellen believes that Buddhism has helped shape the way she thinks and interacts with people in a positive way, as she is more aware of the consequences of her actions on other people. She feels grateful for the guidance she has received at a range of Buddhist

groups over the years, and relates that she is not the sort of person to pick one particular tradition, as she is 'not very dogmatic'. However she notes that she can relate better to 'secular' Buddhism, rather than particular Buddhist beliefs such as rebirth, as she had an Atheist upbringing. Ellen currently attends a Buddhist centre which runs 'in a more Western secular format'. Regarding identification, Ellen says 'I will if anything say I am Buddhist', however she is not entirely comfortable calling herself a Buddhist in contexts where people have 'completely committed to the belief system', as she doesn't believe in things such as rebirth and Buddhist stories about the origination of life. As she explains, 'I wanna respect, you know, what it means to other people'. For Ellen, the self is a 'process' rather than a 'fixed entity'. This view helps her let go of negative things such as anger, and helps her forgive herself as well as others. While Ellen takes an interest in political issues and voting, she believes it is difficult for Buddhist groups to become involved in 'party political processes' as this might create divisions within the group. She thinks it is fine for Buddhist leaders to become politically involved as long as they are able to deal with the consequences of their actions within a particular community.

Evie

Evie is a 23 year-old psychology student who loosely describes her ethnicity as Caucasian. She describes her path towards becoming Buddhist as consisting of a series of events which disposed her towards Buddhism. She relates that her mother is a very 'spiritual' person, who at one stage was planning to become a nun. Evie's mother exposed her to a variety of spiritual and religious ideas from a young age, yet at the same time warned Evie against becoming 'brainwashed' by any religion. Evie says her journey into Buddhism began through exploring mindfulness 'taught in a secular way' at university, and different philosophical and scientific perspectives on non-duality. These experiences gave her the faith to investigate Buddhism more thoroughly, and she began reading Buddhist texts and increasing her practice of meditation. Her commitment to a Buddhist path solidified after a particular experience at work reminded her of Buddhist teachings about the ego. This led to her stopping at a crystal store after work and feeling compelled to buy a necklace with a Buddhist symbol. She then experienced a 'profound, non-dual awareness' experience, in which she decided

on the spot to commit to overcoming greed, hatred and ignorance, and making 'kind of the Bodhisattva vow' to help others. Over the years, Evie has developed a network of people and groups who have supported her in her practice of Buddhism, including Buddhist, interfaith and spiritual friends, visiting Buddhist scholars, and a variety of Buddhist groups. She describes herself in the interview as Buddhist, but notes that her criteria for self-identification as a Buddhist does not necessarily equate to others' acceptance of her as a Buddhist. In particular, she expresses frustration about feeling pressured by certain monastics to take refuge or a formal ceremony in order to be regarded as Buddhist, and to receive support for her practice. Evie would like more consistent support and guidance along her spiritual path, but finds this difficult due to the diversity of her experiences. She relates undergoing a period of struggle against 'Western materialism' in which she considered giving up her career ambitions and becoming a nun. However she has since been able to reconcile these conflicting worlds by pursuing further study in psychology.

Fabian

Fabian is a 29 year-old case worker with an Irish background. His journey as a Buddhist began as an interest in meditation during high school. He relates that his parents were initially quite strict about him not engaging in any form of religious practice, as they were (and still are) both Atheist. Fabian started off by meditating by himself, but says that at some point he joined a Buddhist meditation group. When asked why he chose to take up Buddhist meditation, Fabian notes that this was the only option available to him, as his parents were strongly against Christianity and Islam, while they didn't seem to have an opinion about Buddhism. Later on, when his parents found out he was attending a Buddhist meditation group, Fabian found it more difficult to explain his Buddhist involvement to them. He notes that his father in particular felt that there was 'something wrong' with people who were involved in a religion. He initially worked as a lawyer after graduating, but didn't enjoy this as he felt disconnected from other people. His decision to become a case worker was inspired by his Buddhist practice, as he wanted to do something to help others and feel more connected to the community. Fabian is currently training to become ordained as a lay Buddhist teacher. He still finds it difficult talking to his parents about Buddhism. He also says that most

of the people at the Buddhist centre he attends have become his close friends, and that he currently lives with a few of them. Fabian notes that their friendship 'didn't happen by accident', and that they all deliberately tried to become better friends, and create a context in which being Buddhist felt 'normal'. Fabian relates that when he tells other people he is going on a Buddhist retreat, he receives mixed responses – some will be 'really positive', some will expect him to be 'Zen' or calm in the face of difficulties, while others tell him that if they were to be interested in any religion it would be Buddhism (Fabian likens this to his parents' attitude). Fabian identifies meat eating, drinking (alcohol) culture, 'career driven culture' and being 'too focused on personal acquisition' as aspects of Australian society which 'don't quite fit in with Buddhism'. Fabian is active politically on an individual level. He believes it is difficult to connect Buddhist groups to a political stance as this will affect the way others relate to the community. Fabian calls himself a Buddhist, but notes that he didn't feel this was necessary for a long time. He emphasises the fact that the term 'Buddhist' is merely a label which describes a way of life he is trying to lead. Fabian believes that the self is a constant process, and feels there is no part of him that isn't connected in some way to other people or the environment. This perspective has helped him to give more to other people, saying, 'I have to respond to the world in a way that I'm part of it...I have to try to be less self-centered, because that's how the world actually is'.

Faye

Faye is a 23 year-old case worker and graduate student who describes her ethnicity as Caucasian Australian. She has a Christian mother and an Atheist father. When Faye was 16 years old, she saw advertisements for the 'Happiness and Its Causes' Conference in Sydney, and decided that she wanted to go. After weeks of fundraising efforts and finding relatives to stay with in Sydney, she collected enough money to attend. Faye remembers being awestruck upon seeing the Dalai Lama for the first time, saying, 'I remember just feeling like, the silence of a room full of like, hundreds of people when he kind of came in, and everyone was just sort of, in awe of him.' Two years later, Faye's brother left for Cambodia to become a Buddhist monk and Faye started attending a Cambodian Theravadan Buddhist temple. Upon finishing her undergraduate degree, Faye decided to travel to India for a Buddhist pilgrimage. Faye

next travelled to Cambodia where she stayed in Buddhist monasteries for three months, shaving her head, wearing all white and practicing 8 precepts and 8 core understandings. She immensely enjoyed this process, and found it difficult to adjust to life upon returning to Australia, saying it was 'kinda like an identity crisis'. In particular, she was uncomfortable with the idea of chanting in her parents' house. As a result, Faye and her brother now live separately from their parents, and chant together every morning and night. During her interview, she expressed sadness for not having her parents' permission to become a nun – one of the requisites for being accepted into the Buddhist Sangha. Faye hopes that after she finishes her university degree, she can convince her parents to allow her to become a Buddhist nun as she would have 'ticked all the boxes', and 'done all these normal life things'. Faye now attends a Theravadan monastery, where she says the few White Buddhist practitioners who attend stand out. She remarks that many Buddhists from Asian backgrounds are often surprised to find out that she is a Buddhist.

Henry

Henry is a 28 year-old Chinese-Australian working full time as a business analyst. He came to Australia about 7 years ago as an international student, and is now an Australian citizen. During his university years, he joined a Buddhist group to further develop his interest in philosophy. He currently subscribes to several mailing lists, newsletters and Facebook groups related to Buddhism. He also volunteers for Buddhist events, although he notes that he doesn't limit his volunteering to Buddhist events. He attends Buddhist centres sporadically throughout the year, and would like to go more often, however there are none close to where he lives. Henry doesn't call himself a Buddhist, but likes to learn about and discuss Buddhism with others. Henry says he talks about Buddhism with friends who are also interested in Buddhism quite often, once every few weeks. Otherwise, the times when Henry would bring up Buddhism in conversation are when people appear to have an interest in Buddhism or spirituality, or if they seem to be 'depressed'. He believes that most people aren't interested in Buddhism, or any religion for that matter, unless they are going through some difficulty in life, such as illness, depression or the loss of a loved one. He also believes most Australians wouldn't be interested in Buddhism unless they had some

Asian connections or had travelled to Asia. He remarks with surprise that some Australians are very isolated in terms of their exposure to other cultures, even though it is an advanced society with easy access to information about the world. Henry says he is not sure what it means to be an Australian, and that the question is a difficult one because it is similar to attempting to define religion – there is no single definition that can cover all religions. However he likes the way Australians treat each other, and thinks he will feel more Australian the longer he lives here. Henry regularly volunteers as an English tutor for newly arrived immigrants, as well as various events which bring him into contact with people from different cultural backgrounds. He believes it is important for everyone, regardless of their religion or cultural background, to contribute to society, and to learn about other cultures.

Kieu

Kieu is a 29 year-old business owner who identifies as Vietnamese. She first became involved in Buddhism through her grandmother, who used to take her to the temple with her in Vietnam. Kieu says she is also greatly indebted to her mother for making her go to the temple with her when she was a teenager. She relates that during this time, she was spending a lot of time with a 'bad' group of friends, and often stayed out partying all night. Because of this, Kieu didn't finish her high school education, making her parents very upset. Her mother started taking her to the temple and talking to her every day about Buddhist teachings. After a while, Kieu decided she needed to go back to school and finish what she had started. She says she is a better person now, and that her parents are proud of her. Kieu feels it is very important to do good things and try to help other people. She tries to volunteer at her local temple as much as possible. Sometimes she will buy beads and make bracelets to sell at the temple. She says she is proud of the time she managed to raise money to help the temple build a carpark, by once buying a statue which was auctioned for \$17,000. Kieu is quite open about her religious identity with others, and says that the topic of religion will sometimes come up when she is speaking to her clients. She notes that people often respond positively when she tells them she is Buddhist. Throughout the interview, Kieu refers to the Buddha as 'God'. When asked whether she sees the Buddha as a God, Kieu says she isn't referring to the Christian God, but is using the

term 'God' because of the way the word 'Phat' (Buddha) is translated into English. Yet in a sense, Kieu views the Buddha as a deity who will help those in need of difficulty, or will punish those who do bad things. She says that 'when people make a mistake, something bad would happen to them straight away'. Kieu also talks to her husband a lot about Buddhism, and says although he has a good heart, he needs to 'give it out more', so that whatever he has will not be taken away. She is happy about the fact that she now has her husband thinking about sponsoring a child in Africa.

Maria

Maria is a 28 year-old computer clerk who lived in Queensland before moving to Melbourne. She describes her ethnicity as Australian with European culture. Maria has a Catholic upbringing, and describes her progression towards Buddhism as one in which she experienced difficulties in high school, causing her to stop believing in God. When she was 19, and after a period of agnosticism, Maria was exposed to Buddhism through friends. Maria did her own research and found a nearby Buddhist temple in the Yellow Pages which she started attending on a weekly basis. Although she enjoyed the teachings, Maria found the temple community too large to enable her to receive personal guidance from a teacher. A few years later, Maria had the opportunity to travel to Melbourne for a work conference. While she was in Melbourne, Maria decided to visit various temples, and in particular liked a lay Buddhist centre recommended to her by some Buddhist friends. Soon afterwards, she travelled to India with members of this centre on a Buddhist pilgrimage. Her connection with members of the centre grew stronger, and she decided to move to Melbourne, finding a place to live within walking distance to the centre. Since then she has been a regular attendee and volunteer at the centre. Maria has kept the reason for her relocation to Melbourne a secret from her parents, fearing negative judgments from them. She speaks with excitement about taking her parents with her to visit temples and give alms when they visit her in Melbourne. Maria says that her parents are very accepting of her religious beliefs, and vice versa; Maria tells her mother to pray for her when she goes to church every week. However Maria chooses to limit the amount of information her parents know about her involvement with Buddhism, believing they

are more likely to support her religious path if they do not know the extent of her involvement.

Neville

Neville is a 20 year-old university student studying marketing and psychology. He arrived in Australia as an immigrant from Vietnam when he was 5 years old. His ancestry is Vietnamese-Chinese. His parents have had a considerable influence on his Buddhist upbringing as they owned a temple in Vietnam, and also took him to live at the local Buddhist temple when they arrived in Australia. He says it was relatively easy for him to live in the temple when he was younger, as there were other children also living there up until their mid-teens. Neville was the last to leave when he started VCE studies, 'due to the workload'. Nowadays, Neville attends the temple regularly, but is mainly involved in charity work, which he enjoys more than practices such as chanting and other 'rituals'. While he is very active in the temple, Neville says that the topic of religion doesn't come up much in conversations with friends. He describes talking about religion with friends as 'a bit weird, yeah, that's really weird', and notes that 'mainly with this age group, they don't pay much attention to religion'. Neville also believes that while there is a lack of understanding of Buddhism in Australia, it is fairly easy to practice Buddhism in Australia as most people are tolerant and open-minded. However, he observes that it is more difficult for Westerners to become involved in 'the spiritual practices of the temple' he attends due to the language barrier, as most services are conducted in Vietnamese. He notes that although he is too busy with his university studies to read Buddhist books regularly, 'Buddhism will always be with me, and I will always practice it my entire life'. Neville attributes his 'high emotional intelligence' to the influence of Buddhism, saying it helps him understand and respond to others more effectively.

Peter

Peter is a 19 year-old biology student and Buddhist youth group leader at his local temple. He first became involved in Buddhism when he was about ten years old, when his parents started dropping him off at the temple on Sundays. Peter doesn't talk to his parents much about Buddhism, and he says most of his Buddhist education has

come from his temple involvement. His mother plays videos of Buddhist sermons at home, although he only looks at these videos for 'I dunno, half a minute'. He describes his parents' way of practicing as 'traditional' and the Buddhist education at youth group as 'more modern'. Peter relates that he didn't have much of an interest in Buddhism to begin with, and that he initially found it boring due to the gender segregation at the youth group he attended. He began to enjoy attending the youth group during his high school years, when he was able to interact with girls. He said he also matured during this time, and started listening rather than talking, which helped him to understand more. Peter describes his role as a youth leader as 'pretty simple'. He doesn't think he has any particular aims regarding this role, although he notes that being given a leadership role made him 'step up' and 'I guess take responsibility'. He says it 'feels good' to be able to give back to the youth group, as it has helped shape him as a person. Peter says he isn't the type of person to try and hide his religion, and doesn't think there would be any negative reactions upon disclosing his Buddhist identity, as Buddhism is seen as 'a more peaceful, calm sort of religion'. Peter also believes multiculturalism in Australia has led to a greater acceptance of religious diversity. However, he perceives of Buddhism as a minority religion as 'the majority of people who practice Buddhism in Australia are Asians'. Peter doesn't talk to his non-Buddhist friends about Buddhism unless it comes up in conversation, as 'it doesn't seem like something that people would care about'. For Peter, the notion of being 'Australian' holds little meaning to him beyond being born in Australia. While he doesn't feel there is a need for Buddhists to be involved politically, Peter strongly believes that it is important to contribute to society, and relates that the notion of helping others is 'deeply ingrained' in the youth group.

Rupal

Rupal is a 29 year-old information technology student. He has been living in Australia for 4 years, while his parents remain in Sri Lanka. Rupal's parents raised him as a Buddhist from a young age, taking him with them to the temple where he learnt the 'main principles' of Buddhism. He started questioning these principles by first trying to determine their scientific validity, but then decided it was more important for a religion to be psychologically beneficial and applicable to daily life. He finds his

parents' practice of Buddhism, which he described as 'blindly following the rituals', to be of little use, saying 'there's nothing that you can gain from that'. Rupal's daily meditation practice is to 'find your biggest enemy of the day and be compassionate of[sic] him or her, so make your mind clear'. He finds this practice is beneficial because it makes him happy. As well as helping himself, Rupal also tries to help his friends whenever they are going through any difficulties. When talking to friends, he believes it is important to think about 'the way you communicate with someone', and to 'be compassionate' without trying to change their religion. Rupal relates that most of his knowledge about Buddhism comes from reading books from temples or friends, as well as online resources written in Sinhalese. He goes to Buddhist temples in Australia mostly 'cause I just want to be with friends'. He does not have a preferred temple' and does not 'feel anything' when going there because most of the prayers are in Pali, which he cannot understand. He also observes that many Buddhist temples in Australia are 'community based', and that there are few temples or centres with a diverse range of cultures. However, he finds it easier to practice Buddhism in Australia than in Sri Lanka because of the 'freedom and democracy'. He relates, 'in Sri Lanka, they force you to go to temple'. He notes that many people in Sri Lanka spend long hours working, leaving little time for religious practice.

Steven

Steven is a 23 year-old university student majoring in law. He was brought up in a Malaysian Buddhist environment from a young age. Steven describes his development as a Buddhist as something that just happened naturally over time; he doesn't consider himself as someone who consciously thinks about Buddhism and tries to apply it to his life. However, Steven believes that Buddhism has been one of the most influential things shaping him as a person, saying it is 'infused into like everything I've done, and how I've been brought up, like being here for so long, it's like part of my life'. Most of his friends are either Christian, or do not identify with any religion. Steven notes that his Buddhist upbringing often influences the way he interacts with others, particularly when he tries to help friends going through difficulties. However, he is careful not to 'term' his advice as Buddhism, but as 'life skills'. Steven also believes that it's important to 'push' his beliefs onto anyone, and that he is able to

have more of a positive impact on people by taking this approach. He believes that Australia is very 'open' towards understanding and accepting other cultures as it is multicultural. He doesn't think Buddhists would be discriminated against for disclosing their religious identity, although he also relates that his father has advised him to avoid talking about religion or politics with others, as this could lead to a 'biased stigma' against him. Steven views the meat eating culture in Australia as something which might make it difficult to practice Buddhism.

Tenzin

Tenzin is a 25 year-old community worker who describes himself as a second generation Anglo Buddhist. He grew up with his mother, a former Buddhist nun who he says has been instrumental in facilitating his access to Buddhist teachers from a young age. His early interest in Buddhism led to him becoming ordained while he was in high school, and he says that 'being in the robes' granted him special insider access to many Tibetan Buddhist teachers visiting from overseas. Tenzin describes the 2 years he spent living in a monastery as 'probably one of the most wonderful periods' of his life. However he also relates that the struggle to reconcile Buddhism with his Australian and Western upbringing was challenging, and was what led to him ultimately disrobing. Tenzin felt that being young and White disadvantaged him in certain Buddhist settings, such as in majority Asian situations, or certain Tibetan circles, as he does not speak Tibetan. Additionally, he felt that monasticism removed him from the world to an extent, and made it difficult for him to engage with others as he wished. He felt the segregation and insider-outsider dynamic particularly when he disrobed, and he perceived some members of his religious community distancing themselves from him. Despite these difficulties, Tenzin says his Buddhist upbringing has nurtured an altruistic approach to life, and finds his current work in youth interfaith enjoyable and rewarding. He plans to study psychology in future, and believes Buddhism has much wisdom to offer to the world.

Terry

Terry is a 23 year-old second generation Vietnamese-Australian who calls himself a 'Vietnamese-Australian Buddhist'. He considers his Buddhist identity to be innate, or

‘transferred’ from his parents onto him. Despite this, he notes that he doesn’t have many conversations with his parents about Buddhism. Rather, he is ‘always talking to my parents more about my identity as a Vietnamese person. If I were to ask about Buddhism, I would maybe ask to my colleagues or maybe the Venerable himself, to see what is correct and incorrect.’ Terry enjoys going to the temple as ‘that’s the only place that I have a strong bond with the Vietnamese community’. Terry muses that he has been to his local Vietnamese Buddhist temple ‘many more times than my parents’, and that his ‘mum is interested in the Theravada Buddhism more than the Mahayana...she’s not really into...Vietnamese Buddhism as I [would] expect’. In addition to community involvement, Terry also has an intellectual interest in Buddhism. He notes that he has independently researched the history of Buddhism and its different sects, including their similarities and differences. Terry notes that he doesn’t discuss Buddhism unless he is in a ‘Buddhist environment’. Terry believes there is ‘not too much’ ‘awareness of Buddhism in Australia’, but he doesn’t ‘have any problem with that, as long as I am able to celebrate what the Buddha has achieved, and what the Sangha has taught’. He believes that because Australia is a multicultural country, ‘there’s no difficulties in relation to Buddhist practices at all’, because ‘respect and appreciation is a big idea’, and ‘religion is part of the multiculturalism’. Terry is committed to inspiring young people to ‘become good citizens, in order to contribute positively to the society in which they live’. He thinks that ‘the Buddhist community should try to integrate itself into the community, as long as there are no particular conflict[s] in relation to politics’.

Victor

Victor is a 25 year-old law and engineering graduate. He was initially unsure whether the criteria for taking part in the study applied to him, as he had only developed an ‘active interest’ in Buddhism over the past three years. Prior to this, he considered himself to be a ‘cultural Buddhist’ who grew up in a family of ‘semi-practicing’ Vietnamese Buddhists. Victor considers his real interest in Buddhism to have begun only when he stayed with a practicing Buddhist while completing an internship overseas. Although he grew up in a Buddhist family and spent a significant amount of time at the temple from a young age, Victor claims that his experience overseas

enabled him to experience Buddhism as a 'living philosophy' for the first time. Upon returning to Australia, Victor decided to read as widely about Buddhism as he could. Additionally, he noted things in his 'artistic or cultural life just started ramping up', pointing him towards a 'particular kind of Buddhism' which resonated with him. At the time of interviewing, Victor had been sitting on a twice-weekly basis with a Korean Zen Buddhist group for about 18 months. When asked to describe his experience of being involved in the Zen Buddhist community, Victor stated that it was 'one of the very strongest...places where I've felt that I've belonged'. Victor noted that his parents were aware of his Zen Buddhist practice, but did not talk to him about it. In addition to attending Zen sittings, Victor also spends a few hours every week at his local Buddhist temple, helping draft and edit documents.

Winona

Winona is a 27 year-old kindergarten assistant who describes her ethnicity as Australian. She first became interested in Buddhism during primary school, when her father attended a meditation retreat. She relates that 'for some reason', she and her siblings also wanted to attend. They did so when Winona was in her mid-teens. Winona says she has attended a few different Buddhist groups over the years, but has been put off by some of these groups due to cultural differences, the format of the sessions, or the 'vibe'. She relates that religion is not important to the way she defines herself, but 'spirituality' is. Winona doesn't consider Buddhism to be a religion, and she believes this is because she was not brought up as a Buddhist. She stresses that she likes to practice Buddhism in a way which is practical, and she is not keen on rituals, cultural practices, and the use of 'flowery' or 'academic' language. Winona considers herself to be a 'real Buddhist' as she goes to the temple 'to have a spiritual experience', while most of the other people who go to the temple are just there to socialise. She is also unhappy about the gender imbalance at most of the Buddhist centres she has attended, as the teachers have tended to be 'men, men, men, men'. Winona doesn't like to reveal to others that she is Buddhist. She relates, 'It feels like a secret that I'm Buddhist'. When asked if she would like to keep things this way, Winona says that she does. She believes religious people are seen as 'crazy' and 'rigid', and is cautious about revealing her Buddhist involvement to others because she

doesn't want people to think of her in that way. She also feels as though Buddhism is 'sacred' to her, and is concerned that some of this sacredness might be lost if she were to be open with others about it. Winona believes that the image of the Buddha is popular in Australia, even though not many people know what Buddhism is. She identifies the 'widespread and regular consumption of alcohol' as something which makes it difficult to practice Buddhism in Australia, as well as advertising, which she believes distracts people from observing themselves. Winona is active in her local community, and regularly signs petitions and donates money to organisations related to animal welfare and asylum seekers. Winona believes it is important to vote, as it is a way of having her voice heard.

Yen

Yen is a 20 year-old Malaysian Chinese university student majoring in human resource management. She is currently working part time at a café, and helping out at her local temple on weekends. She first became involved in Buddhism due to the influence of her mother, who took her to children's classes at the temple when she was younger. Yen relates that she had no interest in the classes at first, saying, 'you know it's a bit hard, you don't wanna be sitting in meditation class, you wanna go out and play'. However as she grew older, she 'eventually' developed a personal interest in Buddhism. She says her mother has played a 'huge' role in supporting her 'cultivation', as she is 'very active at the temple' and is always able to provide advice. Her mother has also played a large role in introducing the family to a vegetarian diet, as she cooks for the family. At the time of interviewing, Yen had recently arrived back from Thailand. Yen found the retreat useful, as it helped her to let go of her attachment to the idea of personal autonomy, and to understand her connection to others. She also found it was easy to develop an immediate rapport with people in Thailand as there were many more Buddhists, and easy access to vegetarian food. In Australia, Yen admits that it is more difficult for the 'Caucasian' people at her temple to understand the teachings, as all the classes are conducted in Chinese. She doesn't feel discriminated against for being a Buddhist in Australia, and doesn't think Buddhists are perceived negatively as they are perceived as 'a very chilled people', and aren't 'up in your grill about like, being Buddhist'. However, she feels it is important to 'test the

water' and be 'very general' in Australia due to the cultural diversity and the possibility of offending others. Yen generally does not tell other people she is a Buddhist unless it comes up in conversation. While this is partly due to the possibility of discrimination, Yen also believes Buddhism is 'kind of like a life philosophy' rather than a religion, and she would rather let her 'actions for being a Buddhist' speak for themselves, rather than be labelled as a Buddhist. Yen feels more of an affinity to her Malaysian Chinese heritage than her Australian nationality due to her values, although she thinks 'it's a privilege definitely to be able to call myself Australian'. She says that her Malaysian Chinese background allows her to 'get away from things' she does not want to do, such as drinking alcohol, as most people believe Malaysian Chinese are very conservative. Yen doesn't have an interest in politics, although she contributes to social causes such as the 40 hour famine, and volunteer activities at the temple.

Yoshi

Yoshi is a 28 year-old public servant who identifies as Malaysian-Chinese. He was brought up as a Buddhist from a young age by his family. However it was only during his high school years that he found the temple environment, and meditation in particular as a useful way to deal with the stresses of studying. Yoshi relates that his mother has also been a major 'pillar' supporting this religious development, and that he finds it helpful to watch her give advice to others. He says that he helps out at his temple on an 'ad-hoc' basis with whatever he is asked to do, and that has also assisted other Buddhist groups when asked. Buddhist teachings about the self have had a positive influence on Yoshi's life. His view is that there is no self, that people are interconnected and are constantly changing. Yoshi finds that when he makes an effort to reduce his sense of ego or self, and focus on helping other people, he is also helping himself. Yoshi relates that people tend to come to him for help when they are experiencing difficulties, and that he will encourage them to come to the temple if they express an interest in Buddhism. He finds that when he talks to people who aren't Buddhist, or do not have an interest in Buddhism, he tends to talk more about Buddhism in a way which is applicable to daily life, without necessarily identifying his ideas as 'Buddhist'. Yoshi believes that most Australians are very open, and that the influence of the Dalai Lama has made it easier for Australians with a Western

background to accept Buddhist teachings. He notes that when he was younger, he called himself a Buddhist because his parents and grandparents were Buddhists; nowadays he feels that the label is less relevant, and that it is more important to be a good human being.

Study: Self-perception and belonging

Are you aged between 18 and 30?

Have you had an active interest in Buddhism over the past five years?

If so, we want to talk to you!

What is this study about?

This is a PhD study exploring young people's self-perceptions, sense of belonging and spiritual practices.

How can I become involved?

If you:

- are between the ages of 18 and thirty
- have lived in Australia for five or more years, and
- have taken an active interest in Buddhism for five or more years,

we would like to speak to you. Just contact the student researcher via the phone or email details listed below to find out if you are eligible!

What will I be asked to do?

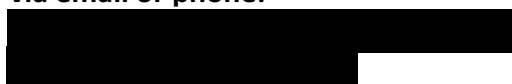
We would like to conduct tape-recorded interviews approximately an hour in length.

If you consent to being contacted by the student researcher at a later date, you may be asked further questions relating to the study aims.

It's completely up to you how much you want to be involved, or whether you want to be involved at all!

What if I need further information before deciding to participate?

If you would like more information please contact the student researcher, Kim Lam via email or phone:



Study: Self-perception and belonging

Are you aged between 18 and 30?

Were you raised in a Buddhist environment?

If so, we want to talk to you!

What is this study about?

This is a PhD study exploring young people's self-perceptions, sense of belonging and spiritual practices.

How can I become involved?

If you:

- are between the ages of 18 and thirty
- have lived in Australia for five or more years
- have been exposed to Buddhism from a young age, and
- are currently engaged in Buddhist practices,

we would like to speak to you. Just contact the student researcher via the phone or email details listed below to find out if you are eligible!

What will I be asked to do?

We would like to conduct tape-recorded interviews approximately an hour in length.

If you consent to being contacted by the student researcher at a later date, you may be asked further questions relating to the study aims.

It's completely up to you how much you want to be involved, or whether you want to be involved at all!

What if I need further information before deciding to participate?

If you would like more information please contact the student researcher, Kim Lam via email or phone:



Appendix 4 – Explanatory Statement

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Project: Self-perception, praxis and belonging

Researchers:

A/Prof Anita Harris

Department of Political and Social Inquiry

Phone: +61 X XXX XXX

email: anita.harris@monash.edu

Kim Lam (PhD student)

Department of Political and Social Inquiry

[REDACTED]

You are invited to take part in this study. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed above.

What does the research involve?

This research project aims to explore how young Australians Buddhist practitioners express and perceive of their spirituality in an Australian context. It will also investigate the connections young Buddhist practitioners have with other members of the community and their social, political and spiritual commitments.

You do not need to identify as a Buddhist to participate in the project. The researchers are interested in speaking to anyone who has lived in Australia for at least five years, is between the ages of 18 to 30 and has engaged in Buddhist practices, activities and/or learning about Buddhism over a period of five years or more.

If you decide to take part in this project, you will first be contacted by the student research by email or phone and asked some questions to determine whether you are eligible to take part. If you meet the requirements, a face-to-face interview will be arranged. With your permission, we will conduct semi-structured, tape-recorded interviews approximately one hour in length.

Interviews may take place at a number of locations, including meeting rooms in universities, The Buddhist Society of Victoria or public libraries as nominated by you. Once the interview has been transcribed, a copy of the transcript will be sent to you for your approval. You may also be invited to take part in observational field research and/or focus groups.

There are no costs associated with participating in this research project, nor will you be paid.

Why were you chosen for this research?

Your contact details were obtained when you responded to the student researcher after reading a flyer containing information about the study. You were invited to take part in this project because you are between the ages of 18 and 30, have lived in Australia for the past five years and have been engaged in Buddhist practices for at least five years. Please inform the student researcher immediately if you do not meet these conditions, as this will affect the results of the study.

Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research

The consent process involves signing and returning the consent form to the researchers either in person or by post. Your involvement in this study is completely voluntary. While we would be pleased to have you participate, we respect your right to decline. If you decide to discontinue participation at any time, you may do so by completing a Withdrawal Form and returning it to a member of the research team. Such action will not affect the way in which participants are treated. You are free to elect not to answer specific questions or give specific information. You are under no obligation to provide any information.

Possible benefits and risks to participants

The research will enable participants to provide researchers with in-depth, up-to-date knowledge about influence of Buddhism on identity formation amongst young Australian Buddhists. This may lead to the development of greater understanding of young Buddhists in an Australian context.

It is not expected that the inconvenience and/or discomfort caused by the research will extend beyond that expected in everyday life experiences. Unlikely but possible low level discomforts include interview-induced anxiety, or distress when discussing issues related to marginalisation. It is also possible that social anxiety may result from researcher field observation. Possible inconveniences include giving up time to participate in the research. If you have any concerns about this research project, please do not hesitate to let us know at any stage of the project.

Services on offer if adversely affected

If you feel your participation in the project has caused you stress beyond the range of everyday life experiences you can call Lifeline on 13 11 14. Monash University also offers a free counselling service for all students.

Confidentiality

All information will be treated in a confidential manner. Your name will not be used in any publication arising out of this research. The anonymity of participants will be protected by the use of pseudonyms, and all identifying features will either be omitted or changed as appropriate. Additionally, participants will not be asked to name themselves in the recording.

Storage of data

All non-digital data will be stored securely in researchers' offices until the conclusion of the project. All digital data will be stored securely on Google Drive, with which Monash University has a formal agreement in place to ensure compliance with legal and privacy obligations. During this time only the chief investigators will have access to the data. The information will then be securely archived in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for a minimum of five years in accordance with Monash University regulations.

Use of data for other purposes

At the conclusion of the project, aggregate de-identified data may be used for other projects where ethics approval has been granted.

Results

A copy of results of the study will be published in poster format at the conclusion of the interview, and will be provided to (insert name of Buddhist group). Results may also be published in an academic journal, and will be made available to participants if requested.

Complaints

Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics (MUHREC):

Executive Officer
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Room 111, Building 3e
Research Office
Monash University VIC 3800
Tel: +61 3 9905 2052 Email: muhrec@monash.edu
Fax: +61 3 9905 3831

Thank you,

A/Prof Anita Harris
School of Political and Social Inquiry
Monash University
Ph: +61 X XXX XXX
anita.harris@monash.edu

Appendix 5 – Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

(Insert name of Buddhist group)

Project: Self-perception, praxis and belonging

Chief Investigator: A/Prof Anita Harris
Department of Sociology
School of Political & Social Inquiry
Monash University
PO Box 197
Caulfield East
Victoria 3145
Australia

I have been asked to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement and I hereby consent to participate in this project.

I understand the purposes, procedures and risks of the research described in the project.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.

I freely agree to participate in this research project as described and understand that I am free to withdraw at any time during the project.

I consent to the following:	Yes	No
An audio recorded interview	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking part in observational field research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking part in an audio recorded focus group of up to 10 people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The data that I provide during this research may be used by the student researcher in future research projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The results of this research project will be published and/or presented in a variety of formats	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Participant _____

Participant Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix 6 – Interview Schedule

Introduce self and thank the participant for giving up time to be interviewed. Outline structure of the interview.

Self introduction: *Firstly I'm going to ask you to introduce yourself to me. I might ask you for some basic background information if it's not covered in your own introduction. We'll then talk about your interest and experiences of Buddhism, and how you see yourself as someone with an interest in Buddhism. We'll also talk about your activities in the community if you do anything like that, and any social or political issues you might be passionate about. I'm also interested in hearing your views on being Australian. Does this sound okay with you?*

Identity

Since we've just met, I'd like to know a bit about you. Please tell me about yourself.

Background questions:

How long have you lived in Australia?

Are you a citizen, permanent resident or on a visa?

Which language do you speak at home?

How would you describe your ethnicity?

Are you currently working? Studying? Unemployed?

How old are you this year?

Religion

Now I'd like to hear about your experiences of Buddhism. So you've kindly agreed to be interviewed as someone with an active interest in Buddhism. Could you tell me a bit more about this? (Prompt: Do you remember how you first became interested in it? Was it something you were brought up with, or was there anything that sparked your interest in it?)

What aspects of Buddhism are you currently exploring? And what are your main sources of information about Buddhism? (Prompt for practices, teachings, materials read)

Are you aware of different schools of Buddhism? Is there one or more that appeal to you more than others? Do you have a teacher or particular school you follow?

Now you might have come across the flyer promoting this study through BSV/MITRA. (If applicable) Could you tell me about your involvement with this group? Have they had any role in supporting your interest in Buddhism? (Also prompt for length of time involved, activities, attendance, contribution to group organisation, connection with others in group)

(If in leadership position) What kinds of things do you try to organise? Have you ever faced any difficulties in trying to do so (e.g. lack of knowledge, resources, support from others)

Apart from MITRA/BSV, are you involved in any other Buddhist groups? Could you tell me about your involvement in these groups?

Are there any Buddhist practices that you do on your own, that don't involve these groups?

Could you tell me a bit more about (activities involved in) and what they mean to you? What do you think your main goal is in doing these activities/practices? Is there something you're aiming for, maybe on a personal or spiritual level?

How do other people feel about you doing these activities? Apart from people you might see at MITRA/BSV, do other people know about what you do?

Do you find religion or spirituality is something that comes up in conversation? Or not really?

If it does come up in conversation, who are the types of people you might feel comfortable telling about your Buddhist activities, if you do? Colleagues? People you meet at uni? Friends? Family?

Do you think Australians in general are receptive towards Buddhism? What's been your experience?

In your experience/opinion, are there any aspects of Australian culture which make it difficult to practice Buddhism? (prompt: food, lifestyle, recreation, social/cultural norms)

Do you think people from certain religions have it more difficult than others in Australia? Do you identify with any of these groups? Do you consider Buddhists to be a minority group in Australia?

So far we've been talking about your Buddhist activities and it's been really interesting to hear. What this study is also focusing on is how people see themselves as Buddhist practitioners.

Now Buddhist teachings about the self are often difficult for most people to understand. What is your understanding of Buddhist teachings about the self? What is your view on these teachings? Have these teachings had an impact on how you see yourself?

As someone with an interest in Buddhist practices, have you ever thought about yourself, the 'doer' of these activities in a particular way?

Do you think this perception about yourself has had an impact on the way you live your life?

Going back to talking to people outside of Buddhist circles about your Buddhist activities. Do you ever label or define yourself in some way to them? (Prompt: Some people might call themselves spiritual, Buddhist, Mahayana/Theravada Buddhist, Chinese/Sri Lankan Buddhist, etc. Some people might not use any of these terms. Do you use any of them yourself?)

If so, what kinds of words would you use to describe yourself? How useful do you think these terms are for describing yourself to others? Are there any other words you might use?

(If Buddhist) Who are the people in your life who know you are Buddhist? Do you tend to tell others what your religious identity is (if participant claims one)? Why/why not? Are there people or situations in which you feel more comfortable with knowing your religious identity? Have you ever faced any discrimination from others based on your religious identity? If so, how did you feel?

If not Buddhist, could you explain to me your reasons for answering this way? How do you see yourself?

When we are asked to fill out a census, we are asked to tick a box or write a word to show which religion we identify with. Some people might leave this section blank. How do you answer and why?

When it comes to defining yourself, do you think religion/spirituality is relevant? How does it compare to ethnicity, race, nationality or other factors?

Citizenship

We've so far talked about your interest in Buddhism and how you see yourself as a Buddhist practitioner. Now I'd like to hear about any social or political activities you might have an interest in, and your feelings of belongingness in Australia.

What does it mean to you to be Australian?

Have you ever voted in an Australian national election? Is it important for you to vote?

What social/political problems are you most concerned with today? If it were up to you, how would these problems be solved?

Have you ever taken part in any activities which aim to address social or political issues? Please tell me about these experiences.

Do you belong to any organisations/groups that try to change things in the community? If so, which ones? If not, why not?

Have you ever done any volunteering? Have you ever donated time or money to charity? What have these activities been motivated by?

Do you think it's important for Buddhist groups to be involved in the community or charity? What is your view on the role or function of Buddhist groups?

Closing

Those are all the questions I have to ask you today. Thank you for giving up time to take part in this interview, I really appreciate it. Is there anything else you would like to add?

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