

Looking 'East': an exploratory analysis of Western disenchantment'*

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The marked presence of Eastern spiritual ideas in the religious imaginings of Western peoples is a significant feature of the faith landscapes of contemporary societies (King 1999). In particular, Confucius, Buddhism, meditation and yoga have attracted significant Western audiences (Pond 2003). A substantial body of writing has emerged to provide historical, biographical and instructional perspectives on the general phenomenon and divergent spiritual strands within it (Goldstein 2002; Prebish and Baumann 2002). Yet, to date there have been few dedicated sociological studies of the subject. Our aim here is to report the results of an exploratory quantitative sociological analysis of a group of Eastern spiritual practitioners in Australia.

The study of Eastern religion is an established concern in sociological inquiry. However, extant work has been limited to treating Eastern spirituality as a distinguishing characteristic of traditional East Asian societies (e.g. India, China, Japan) or as an ideological creation manifest within Western writing about a mystical Orient. Less present within the discipline are approaches that consider Eastern religion as a potentially significant aspect of identity & lifestyle for many contemporary Western individuals. As a result, sociological knowledge of Eastern spirituality among Western constituents remains comparatively undeveloped. The current research seeks to respond to this

absence by examining the extent to which Eastern spiritual engagement can be understood as an expression of disenchantment with the West.

Treatments of 'Eastern Religion' in Sociology

Eastern religions were a significant preoccupation within classical sociology. Weber (1958) examined the differences between Hinduism and Buddhism. Durkheim (1995) investigated the character of Buddhism as a religious form. Both studies were part of a wider concern in early disciplinary studies with comparative world religions. More recently, Sharot (2001) has analyzed the formation of elite and popular religion across divergent societies. However, as disciplinary interest in the effects of processes of globalization on religious identities (Robertson 1992) and the nature of power relations between 'the West' and 'the Rest' (Hall 1992) has developed, studies of differences between world religious systems in general and Eastern spiritualities in particular are perhaps not as central to sociology as they once were.

Contemporary sociological scholarship tends to treat Eastern religion less as an essentialised social configuration and more as a problematised social construction. In this approach Eastern spirituality is regarded as an ideational product of Occidental Orientalism. A general ideological form associated with Western geographic imaginings, Occidental Orientalism sees the Orient as an 'object of colonial discourses of knowledge and power' (Turner 1989:631) and is interested in how Westerners come to know *themselves* by constructing the Orient as cultural Other (Said 1985).

Orientalism is viewed as having arisen in the early modern era out of the intersection between Enlightenment ideas and patterns of European imperialism (Said 1985), and is seen to be accelerating under modernity through processes of cultural globalization and postmodernization (Turner 1994).¹ Within this Orientalism perspective, Eastern religion has constituted a discursive site for examining the production, representation and use of Western concepts about Otherness, such as the idea of Asian cultures as inferior, exotic, etc. (Gregory 1994).²

Eastern religion has been studied widely in sociology as a feature of societies or discourses. It has also received some limited examination as a property of individuals. Two specific research areas bear some relevance in this regard. One body of work has investigated Eastern religions as an integral aspect of the ethnic identities that Asian immigrants carry upon relocation to Western societies. A key concern in these studies is with how diverse 'Easterners' adapt 'Eastern religions' to new Western settings (Bankston 1997; Numrich 1996). A second area of research has treated Eastern religion as a key element within New Age spirituality, 'a flexible and diffuse vision of spiritual identity based around alternation between fluid sets of practice and belief' (Phillips and Aarons 2005: 217). In these studies, forms of religious observance and ideas associated with the East are regarded as interchangeable elements within a larger set of globally derived spiritualities available to the contemporary Western seeker. Individuals are thought to consume Eastern spiritualities in the process of undertaking a liquid exploration of these different belief systems (Possami 2000; Heelas 1996).

However, what these studies neglect is the idea of individuals *choosing* involvement with Eastern religion *in particular*. Research on New Age religion highlights the notion of individuals selecting spirituality. In particular, the idea of the individual as a 'consumer' in a 'spiritual supermarket' conveys this perspective (Roof 2001). Yet, while focusing on religious style, there is little concern in these studies with the potential significance of spiritual content. By contrast, research on Asian migration exhibits more concern with substance, drawing attention to the idea of dedicated involvement with Eastern spiritual systems in Western settings. However, to date there has been much more interest in how migrants adapt and maintain established belief systems in a new Western context, rather than looking at vital questions around the ways in which they actively choose and develop new religious identities (e.g. Christian, secular).

To reiterate, although it would appear to be a significant source of self-identity and lifestyle practices for individuals in contemporary societies, the decision to engage with Eastern spirituality has remained largely unexamined in empirical sociological research. We aim now to outline what we believe to be some sociologically useful ways for thinking about 'the East' as a spiritual choice for the Western individual, and to use these as a basis for reporting and reflecting on the results of a preliminary quantitative study of a group of Australians who have in different ways become involved in Buddhist practice and belief.

Choosing Eastern Religion: some sociological reflections

Weber coined *Entzauberung der Welt* or disenchantment of the world to refer to the rationalization and *de-magification* of modern social life (Bocock 1992). This key sociological idea highlights the tendency within modernity for individuals to experience a sense of meaninglessness as feelings of enchantment are discredited by the spread of a rationalized way of seeing the world (Besecke 2001). To escape such feelings of inner-emptiness, people may by various means seek to (re) enchant their everyday lives (Cohen and Taylor 1992). Departing from the rich tradition of sociological studies of disenchantment (Jenkins 200), we would like here to highlight the utility of the concept for thinking about the dispositional state that orients modern individuals towards engagement with Eastern religion. Yet, rather than mapping precisely onto Weber's general conception, we suggest that it might be suitable to instead think of involvement with Eastern spirituality as representing an individual response to a more particular form of disenchantment that has emerged as a prevalent feature of modern societies in contemporary times: the problem of being Western under conditions of reflexive modernization.

The problems and prospects of 'the West' is a topic of widespread discussion and reflection in political and mass media discourse today (Carroll 2002; Fevre 2000). In this discursive climate, 'the West' has become increasingly available to individual residents and citizens of Western societies as a resonant source of self-identity. Yet, rather than being uniformly

embraced and invested with feelings of pride and belonging, for many 'the West' is a source of despondency and doubt. Far from being unproblematically absorbed as a natural aspect of self-identity, these members actively reject 'the West' as a marker of who they are. Yet, they find themselves in the position of being citizens and residents of the very kind of society they feel distant from. This raises the question of how the individual seeks to resolve the manifest psychic tension between feeling disenchanting with 'the West', yet holding formal membership of a Western society (Elias 1996; Freud 1963; Goffman 1963).

It is our contention that Eastern spirituality might be plausibly seen as providing a readily available solution to contemporary individuals for coping with such a 'crisis of identity' (Giddens 1991). We suggest it does this by offering a readily 'retrievable' (Schudson 1989) lifestyle into which the individual member is able to find a sense of 'escape' from a Western style of existence (Cohen and Taylor 1992). By enabling the individual to imagine and experience them selves as 'Other', Eastern spiritual practice and belief holds out the promise of a relieving panacea to the painfully-felt problem of being Western. It does this by providing the individual with a means by which to feel they are expunging 'the West' from, and simultaneously assimilating 'the East' within, their sense of self-identity. Through this process of internal critique and renewal, 'the Orient' becomes 'the Other through which the Western Self comes to (re) know itself' (Gregory 1994:170). A 'profound division between the Orient and the Occident' (Turner 1989:630) is established in the mind of

the believer. 'The East' comes to assume a privileged status as a source of knowledge about the world and oneself.

The preceding discussion suggests two testable hypotheses.

H1: Those individuals who are involved with Eastern religion will be more disenchanted with a Western vision of self-identity than individuals-in-general.

H2: Among individuals who are involved with Eastern religion, the highest levels of disenchantment with a Western vision of self-identity will be found among the most deeply engaged.

Both hypotheses proffer expectations about group differences in levels of disenchantment with a Western conception of self-identity. The first involves comparing Eastern practitioners with people-in-general, whereas the second entails contrasting discrete sub groups of Eastern engagers. We now turn to the data we used to scrutinize the two hypotheses. It comes from a quantitative study of a group of Buddhist practitioners conducted in Australia during the late 1990s. As has been widely documented, Buddhism is today one of the most popular forms of Eastern religious practices and belief in Western societies (Coleman 2002).

Research Setting, Data and Methods

Official statistics indicate that Buddhism is one of the 10 most popular religions in Australia today (Bouma 1997). Increased involvement in Buddhism took place during the late part of 20th century within a wider national environment of expanding religious pluralism (Bouma 1995). Asian immigration played a key role in its development (McDonnell and Bucknell 1989), with Buddhism featuring as an integral part of the ethnic identities carried by diverse new arrivals (e.g. Vietnamese, Sri Lankans). However, the growth of Buddhism has also reflected rising interest among individual Australians who are unaffiliated with the new ethnic communities. Rather than being born into Buddhism, these people are distinguished by having developed an individual interest in it at some point during the life course. Their involvement with Buddhism is therefore more a matter of personal choice rather than inherited tradition. Yet, it is likely that in many cases engagement will take place against a background of involvement with a dedicated Western Buddhist religious center (Carey 1996). Such centers offer support to the individual seeking to engage with Buddhism. They typically offer instruction in meditation and study, and a setting in which to pursue these activities.

The data for the current study is from a survey of individuals who hold links with one such organization, the Atisha Center for Tibetan Buddhist Studies. Named after the Indian Guru Lama Atisha, the Center was established in the Australian regional city of Bendigo, Victoria in the early 1980s. The Center is dedicated to providing visitors with a devoted site for

experiencing Buddhism. It aims to make available a supportive environment within which attendees can partake in designated key techniques of involvement (meditation, study, reflection) and learn how to augment their practice of these methods of engagement via spiritual instruction from teachers (Atisha Center 2003).

All persons on the Atisha Centre mailing list were sent a copy of the 'Experience of Tibetan Buddhism' survey for completion in mid-1997. The survey was designed to collect standardized individual-level data about spiritual practice and belief (in particular), social identifications (in general) and social background factors. Of the 333 questionnaires sent out, 169 were completed and returned, a response rate of just over half (50.8 per cent). This was considered to be an adequate result, especially in the absence of a follow-up process for pursuing non-returned questionnaires (de Vaus 1995). In terms of sample composition, we noted the strong presence of females, 'baby-boomers', professional-managerial workers (all around two in three respondents) and the well educated (about two in five had university credentials). This profile fitted well with extant research on the social characteristics of 'seekers' in the wider 'spiritual supermarket' (Roof 2001). Respondents on average first developed an interest in Buddhism 11 years ago. While some respondents had only just recently getting involved, some of the older participants reported having felt an initial curiosity over 30 years ago. More detailed information about the respondents and the social patterning of spiritual commitment among them is available in a precursor overview piece from the research project (Phillips and Aarons 2005).

For the purposes of data analysis the independent variable is engagement with Buddhism. Participants were designated into four subgroups representing distinct modes of spiritual engagement. The process of allocating individuals to subgroups was based on two criteria (i) reported level of participation in key forms of practice such as meditation, study and initiation (more involved/less involved) (Hamilton 1995), and (ii) the degree of importance they personally ascribed to Buddhism as a term for describing themselves (important/not important) (Graetz and McAllister 1994). The dependent variable is felt-connection to Western identity. Respondents were presented with a subset of identity markers that have been seen to constitute key social features of the Western self: gender, ethnic group, age, social class, political party and nation (de Swaan 1995). Information was collected on the level of importance respondents accorded to each identity source in describing themselves. A series of social background variables capturing key aspects of social diversity were used as statistical controls in the analysis (e.g. gender, age, education and politics).³ The relationships among these variables are analyzed using cross-tabulations, factor analysis and regression techniques.⁴

Results

A Key issue for the study is to investigate the connection between disenchantment with a Western conception of self-identity and engagement with Buddhism. As a group, in absolute terms are individuals involved with

Buddhism distinguished by heightened levels of disillusionment with a Western identity? We commence our empirical investigation of this question by considering how Australians who use Buddhism compare with the wider constituency of Australians-in-general, with respect to the personal significance they attach to Western social identifications.

Table I shows that Buddhist engagers are clearly distinguished from other Australians by showing a consistently weaker sense of personal attachment to core Western sources of self-identity. This feeling of distance is most pronounced with respect to the nation (being Australian). Whereas nearly nine in ten people-in-general see Australia as an important source of self-identity (87 per cent), only about one in three consumers of Buddhism ascribe a similar level of personal significance to the nation (35 per cent). Consumers of Buddhism were further strongly delineated from other Australians with regard to their weaker sense of attachment to social class and political party. While a little under half of Australians saw both these identity sources as significant in their self-description (44 per cent and 45 per cent respectively), only around one in five of those involved in Buddhism accorded them a comparable level of importance (18 per cent and 21 percent in turn). The Buddhist clientele were also different from other Australians with respect to according less weight to ethnicity and gender as bases of their sense of self-identity (32 per cent and 47 percent as against 47 per cent and 54 per cent). Yet, while the magnitude of these differences was less pronounced (15 per cent and 7 per cent respectively), they clearly confirmed

the overall picture of a marked sense of disconnection and separateness from key markers of Western self-identity.

Table I about here

This initial pattern of weaker attachment to Western self-identity sources distinguished the participants in the study from other Australians in a consistent and systematic way. Yet, while as a group the participants stood apart from Australians-in-general in terms of the strength of their social identifications, they varied among themselves in terms of the ways in which they engaged with Buddhism. This is an important point because it directs us to the possibility of divergences between subgroups of Buddhist consumers in their disposition towards Western sources of self.

To reiterate, the people in our study were distinguished in terms of the established ties they shared with a Tibetan Buddhist study center. However, the nature of the links felt with Buddhist spirituality manifested in different ways. Table II displays the distribution of participants across a series of subgroups, each distinguished by a particular style of engagement with Buddhism. The modal group of participants can be seen as characterized by *high practice & strong identity*. They reported active levels of participation in key spiritual techniques (e.g. meditation, study, initiation) and saw Buddhism as an important term for describing themselves. Just under half of participants exhibited this form of involvement (46 per cent). At the other end of the spectrum, the next most popular form of engagement was *low practice &*

weak identity. Members of this category were distinguished by more minimal levels of use of the main spiritual methods and distanced themselves from the label 'Buddhist' as a way of depicting themselves. A little over a quarter of participants displayed this manner of engagement (28 per cent). The remaining participants, who comprised around one in four of those sampled, were evenly split between *high practice & weak identity* on the one hand, and *low practice & strong identity* on the other (13 per cent in each category).

Table II about here

Having delineated these four modalities of engagement with Buddhism, we now consider their association with different elements of Western social identity. In this way, we move beyond our initial depiction of Buddhist involvement as an invariable quality (as per Table I), by examining whether distinct subgroups of engagers diverge among themselves in terms of felt-distance from various Western concepts of self. In particular, what we wish to find out is (as per hypothesis 2) whether among the Buddhist practitioners, do the deeply engaged feel the most acute sense of felt-disappointment with an Occidental self.

Turning to Table III, the results show evidence of quite marked subgroup differences along three elements of western social identities: nation, political party and ethnic group. Of the four subgroups, respondents who exhibited *high practice & strong identity* ascribed the greatest importance to these identity sources. At the other end of the spectrum, the *high practice &*

weak identity subgroup were distinguished by according them the least importance. In essence, what these findings show is a notable divergence among the large majority of respondents in the study who reported actively practicing Buddhism (a little under 60 per cent of the sample), with regard to the level of significance they attributed to the West (nation, political party, ethnic group) as sources of their self-identity. More precisely, among dedicated Eastern practitioners, those who rejected the label 'Buddhist' as a self-description were significantly less likely than those who embraced it to find meaning in a Western vision of self-identity.

Table III about here

The results of analysis reported thus far provide some initial insights into possible connections between styles of Buddhist engagement and disenchantment with Western self-identities. However, we need to ask harder questions of the data to develop greater certainty about any such relationship. In the first instance, we need to address possible doubts about the validity of our conception of Western social identity. This involves dealing with reservations about the legitimacy of treating social class, age, ethnicity, gender, political party and the nation as an integrated self-identity set. In other words, is it suitable to regard this cluster of identity markers as a unified and cohesive grouping? The principle components analysis presented in Table IV was designed to address this issue. The results suggest that the statistical case for regarding this collection of identity signs, as together comprising a

sole conceptual dimension is a solid one. All items can be seen to have achieved significant loading on a single interpretable factor.

Table IV about here.

On the basis of finding a single identity factor, we are now in a position to reflect on the question of subgroup differences with a dedicated measure of feelings towards Western self-identity. What happens to the initial relationships suggested in Table III when we introduce a valid and reliable measure of the dependent variable? Our answer to this question is reported in column 1 of Table V. Here we can see that our preliminary bivariate findings have been largely sustained. Among the vigorous practitioners, those who did not self-describe as 'Buddhist' were significantly less prone than those who did to see Western signs and symbols as an important source of self-identity. Age, education and politics were significant factors accounting for feeling towards Western self-identity (column 2). However, the statistically significant differences between Buddhist engagement styles held up even after adjusting for the effects of these variables. In summary, among respondents who were dedicated users of Buddhist techniques, there continued to be a significant gap between those who welcomed Buddhism as a label for describing themselves and those who rejected it terms of the salience accorded to Western sources of self-identity.

Table V about here

Discussion

This research has investigated the salience of the West as a source of self-identity among a group of Eastern practitioners in Australia. Hypothesis one was confirmed. Compared to the wider population, Australians who were involved with Eastern spirituality were much less likely to ascribe importance to Western ideas of self-identity. This gap was particularly marked with respect to the significance attributed to nation for describing the self. Whereas the large majority within the general population saw 'being Australian' as important for describing themselves, only a minority of the Eastern spiritualists accorded it a comparable level of significance. Hypothesis two attracted less support, with the data revealing a more complex scenario of subgroup differences than was originally mooted. Rather than being a quality associated with the high practice/strong identity category, coolness towards a Western conception of self-identity was clearly at its most pronounced among the high practice/weak identity subgroup. This result suggests that disenchantment with the West is at its hardest for individuals who actively practice with Eastern spiritual signs, symbols and techniques yet refuse to name themselves as Buddhist.

The study was characterized by two limitations. The small sample size prevented detailed sub-analyses in pursuit of more subtle patterns in the data. However, some interesting social regularities emerged (Durkheim 1958). The research was limited by the non-availability of a qualitative component for delving into the 'interpretative self-history' (Giddens 1991: 76) of participants.

As such, the study was unable to examine the particular meanings and subjectivities attributed to 'the West'. Such detailed accounts would have deepened understanding of formative experiences that lead to feelings of disenchantment with the West, and the ways in which turning to Eastern spirituality influenced this sense of discontent (i.e. what was it that the teachings were seen to offer?). Against the cross-sectional focus of the current study, such narrative analysis would be a valuable new direction for future research.

This research has treated choosing Eastern religion as a sociologically significant phenomenon in contemporary times. The findings have suggested it constitutes a lifestyle choice through which people living in a modern society may seek to cope with their feelings of disenchantment with the West. By offering the possibility of experiencing and imagining the self as 'Other' than Western (if only temporarily), Eastern spirituality might be understood as a means by which the devout individual seeks to assuage the lack of meaning derived from a modern way of life. Furthermore, the results pointed to the most disenchanted favoring a particular style of Eastern practice. For these adherents, dedicated practice *without belonging* was the preferred mode of engagement with Eastern spirituality. This rejection of an Eastern spiritual identity (i.e. Buddhist) by the very deeply disenchanted was an interesting result. This finding needs further research and reflection. Yet, it is our suspicion that this tendency to resist labeling one's own personal complexion of Eastern spiritual experience could represent a broader recognition of and

ambivalence towards Orientalist practices of classifying and categorizing ‘the East’ (Hall and Gieben 1992).

The study might be seen to suggest that understanding individual experiences of identity imbalance between being Western and feeling Western is an important sociological task in the current climate. In particular, we propose it would be useful to know more about other kinds of lifestyle ‘escapes’ from ontological problems with the Western self. Compared to the alternative possibilities of ‘voice’ and ‘loyalty’ (Alexander 2004) relatively little research has focused on such ‘exit’ types of response (Hirschman 1970) in either literal (e.g. living in an ‘Eastern’ country), or in the case of this study, symbolic form. This focus might be useful as it may draw attention to ‘detachment from’ as against ‘involvement with’ modes of reaction to disenchantment with the West (Elias 1987). Furthermore, rather than seeing these different kinds of response actions as ‘either/or’ options, clarifying how they are used simultaneously may afford insights into new and complex ways in which contemporary individuals seek to cope with and reconcile disenchantment with Western selves.

The current study has suggested that the idea of Orientalism holds important promise for clarifying sociological understanding of the practice of ‘escaping’, ‘exiting’ or ‘detaching’ from Western identity into ‘difference’. However, for this potential to be properly realized, we suggest the importance of developing sociological research work that treats Orientalism as a quality that is empirically observable in the attitudes and actions of individuals. To

reiterate, Orientalism is defined as a way of seeing Otherness that manifests as both *representation* and *perception* (Hall 1992). The dominant approach to studies of Orientalism found in post-colonial studies makes little of this methodologically crucial distinction. Regardless of whether one studies images or views, in this approach it is the ideologically laden text that constitutes the data the lone scholar is invariably charged with reading, decoding and interpreting (Balfe 2004). Yet, in sociology the division between representation and perception might be seen to be of much greater consequence. In a similar way to postcolonial studies, representations are regularly approached in sociology as a quality of texts. However, a key line of difference is the routine treatment of perceptions as an empirically observable property of persons. Sociology brackets off individual attitudes and meanings as a discrete area of research and analysis. The discipline has an extensive coterie of quantitative and qualitative methodologies for their discovery. Yet, remarkably little use has been made of them to date to discover the social distribution and expression of Orientalism among contemporary individuals. The conditions clearly exist for new research connections to be made.

Notes

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¹ Processes of cultural globalization make it more and more difficult to treat the cultural life of the Orient and the Occident as 'separate, autonomous or independent cultural regimes' (Turner 1994:9). The cultural attributes of nation-states comprising World society come to be 'increasingly determined from the outside' (110). Cultural globalization therefore not only results in Americanization, it also brings the 'Orientalisation of modern cultures' (9). This process accelerates as postmodernization brings the 'growth of consumer culture' (126) and the increasing effacement of the 'distinction between high and low culture' (126).

² Sociological studies of Orientalism have been distinguished by a strong concern with social critique and theoretical renewal. Extant research has illustrated large-scale social processes implicated in the construction of Orientalism, revealed the complex ways in which discourses of Orientalism have been mobilized for particular purposes, and distilled various meanings and uses of the concept in academic discourse (Bishop 2000; Hung 2003; Turner 2004).

³ Due to modest sample size, all control variables were measured in binary form. While two-category variables can lead to an oversimplification of results, the advantage is enhanced reliability of findings. This was seen as important given the exploratory nature of the study. Race/ethnicity was treated as a constant in the research and excluded from analytic consideration.

⁴ Further measurement information and descriptive statistics for all variables are reported in Appendix Table A1.

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Table I: Popularity of Social Identifications: a comparison of Western Buddhists and Australians

	Western Buddhists ¹ (1997)	Australians ² (1998)	Group Difference
	Important (%)	Important (%)	+/- (%)
<i>How important is (...) in describing how you see yourself?: (% important)</i>			
Australian	35	87	-52
social class	18	44	-26
political party	21	45	-24
ethnicity	32	47	-15
gender	47	54	-7
age	31	na ³	na

¹ Source: Experiences of Tibetan Buddhism Survey, 1997, N=169

² Source: Phillips and Western (2004), N=1897

³ na: not available

Table II: Engagement with Buddhism: frequency distribution

	(%)	(N)
High practice & strong identity	45.6	77
High practice & weak identity	13.0	22
Low practice & strong identity	13.0	22
Low practice & weak identity	28.4	48
Total	100	169

Source: Experiences of Tibetan Buddhism Survey, 1997, N=169

Table III: Relationships between Western Social Identifications and Engagement with Buddhism, bivariate analysis

<i>Buddhist Engagement</i>	<i>Western Social Identifications (% important)</i>					
	nation (%)	social class (%)	political party (%)	ethnic group (%)	gender (%)	age (%)
High practice & strong identity	42	22	30	38	47	30
High practice & weak identity	14	14	9	18	41	27
Low practice & strong identity	32	23	23	27	50	32
Low practice & weak identity	35	13	13	31	48	33
% (group difference)	28%	10%	21%	20%	9%	6%
χ^2	6.7*	2.5	8.0**	3.5	0.4	0.3

Source: Experiences of Tibetan Buddhism Survey, 1997, n=169

* p<.10 ** p<.05 *** p<.01

Table IV: Structure of Social Identifications among Western Buddhists

	Western Buddhists ¹ (1997)
	Factor Loadings ²
	I
social class	.76
age	.76
ethnicity	.75
gender	.68
political party	.65
Australian	.47
Explained Variance	46.9%
Alpha ³	.76

¹ Source: Experiences of Tibetan Buddhism Survey, 1997, n=169

² Generated using principal components analysis with orthogonal rotation

³ Indicator of reliability

Table V: Multivariate Relationship between Western Social Identifications and Engagement with Buddhism, Controlling for Gender, Age, Education and Politics

	Importance of Western Social Identifications ¹	
	Model A	Model B
	(b)	(b)
high practice & weak identity ²	-.24***	-.22***
low practice & strong identity	-.06	-.06
low practice & weak identity	-.16*	-.12
female	-	.02
older	-	-.17**
higher education	-	.14*
left	-	.23***
R ²	.06	.18

Source: Experiences of Tibetan Buddhism Survey, 1997, n=169

p<.10 ** p<.05 *** p<.01

¹ Six item scale

² Excluded contrast category is high practice & strong identity

Appendix Table A1. Descriptive Statistics for Variables in Regression Analysis

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
western social identity	6 (not important) – 24 (important)	12.0	3.8
low practice & strong identity	1 (low practice & strong identity), 0 (high practice & strong identity)	.13	.34
high practice & weak identity	1 (high practice & weak identity), 0 (high practice & strong identity)	.13	.34
low practice & weak identity	1 (low practice & weak identity), 0 (high practice & strong identity)	.28	.45
gender: female	1 (female), 0 (male)	.63	.48
age: older	1 (41yrs & under), 0 (40yrs & under)	.66	.47
education: higher	1 (university/college degree), 0 (other)	.38	.49
politics: left	1 (identify as 'left' politically), 0 (other)	.46	.50

Source: Experiences of Tibetan Buddhism Survey, 1997, n=169