

AN INTEGRAL INQUIRY INTO THE MEANING OF EARLY ATTACHMENT  
EXPERIENCES FOR AMERICAN ZEN BUDDHISTS

by

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## **Abstract**

### **An Integral Inquiry Into the Meaning of Early Attachment Experiences for American Zen Buddhists**

by

**Jennifer Margaret Wilson**

Although researchers and clinicians in the field of mainstream psychology often view the transformative potential of religious experience as outside the scope of clinical practice, this author proposed that participation in a specific spiritual practice, Zen Buddhist meditation, may positively transform adults' internal working models of attachment, as defined by Bowlby. Hence, using the lens of integral inquiry, this research explored how Zen Buddhist practice affects the attachment styles and autobiographical component of American practitioners' internal representations of early attachment experiences as compared with those of non-Buddhists. Participants' attachment styles were measured using the *Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Adult Attachment Questionnaire (ECR-R)*, and MANOVA analysis showed no statistically significant difference between the attachment patterns of Zen Buddhists and non-Buddhists. A chi-square test also revealed that attachment styles do not appear to change over time as a function of Zen Buddhist meditation or other religious affiliations. Categorical-content narrative analysis, however, illuminated a finding that Zen Buddhists experienced the highest degree of emotional resolution in regard to early attachment-related memories. Narrative analysis also illustrated that Zen Buddhists more frequently articulated themes of agency when sharing childhood memories and significant life events, whereas non-Buddhists more often portrayed themes of communion. Holistic-form narrative inquiry additionally

indicated that religious individuals feel greater emotional resolution in regard to early attachment experience when compared with those who do not engage in religious practice. As such, continued participation in organized religion appears to confer increased flexibility in how childhood attachment memories are remembered and affectively experienced. These findings suggest that transpersonalists may be better served by expanding on knowledge of how long-term participation in organized religious systems impacts daily, ordinary life over the long term, rather than by focusing on decontextualized, discrete spiritual experiences and the phenomenological effects of those experiences.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

*“All living things are one seamless body and pass quickly from dark to dark.”*

–First Dedication, Joan Sutherland Roshi and John Tarrant Roshi

This work situates Bowlby’s (1969/1982, 1973, 1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1988) theory of attachment in the field of transpersonal psychology in that it explores how Zen Buddhist practice affects American practitioners’ attachment styles and autobiographical narratives of early attachment experiences with caregivers as compared with those of American non-Buddhists. Throughout this investigation, *attachment*, as conceptualized by Bowlby (1969/1982), will be defined as an inborn, biologically based, goal-corrected behavioral system motivating infants to exhibit explicit behaviors in an effort to maintain constant proximity to primary caregivers as an evolutionary adaptation ensuring survival. This present work accepts Bowlby’s premise that *internal working models*, dynamic cognitive-affective structures that allow for approximate mental representations of the external environment, serve as a crucial aspect of the attachment system. Bowlby (1969/1982) proposed that internal working models allow infants and young children to evaluate and predict important aspects of caregivers’ availability and plan accordingly to maximize future survival and security. He suggested young children’s self-conceptualizations, beliefs, and expectations about their caretakers and environment arise from continual interactions with primary caregivers and become incorporated into internal working models as the child matures. Bowlby’s (1969/1982, 1973, 1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1988) theory posits that these early imprints operate throughout the lifespan via internal working models. He presumed that they consciously and unconsciously organize, guide, and filter intra- and interpersonal behavior, cognition, and affect into adulthood.

### *Study Statement*

Attachment researchers (Ainsworth, 1967, 1985; Ainsworth & Bell, 1974; Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; C. George, Kaplan, & Main, 1984, 1985, 1996) empirically validated aspects of Bowlby's theory (1969/1982, 1973, 1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1988) in demonstrating, through observations conducted in laboratory settings and specific interview procedures, that infants, children, and adults exhibit distinct behavioral patterns referred to as *attachment styles* or *attachment classifications* when relating to important others. Evidence suggests that both the attachment style of the parents and how caregivers treat a child largely determine which attachment style will predominate for the developing child (Main et al., 1985). Presumed to reflect implicit internal working models based on early attachment representations, a four-category adult attachment model proposed by Main et al. (1985) includes the following classifications: (a) secure/autonomous, (b) dismissing, (c) preoccupied, and (d) unresolved/disorganized.

Individuals with a "secure" attachment (positive self, positive other) are presumed to have internalized a sense of self-worth and a trust that others will be available and supportive; they are autonomous, yet comfortable seeking and expecting support from others. "Preoccupied" individuals (negative self, positive other) are preoccupied with attachment needs and depend overly on others for personal validation, acceptance, and approval. "Dismissing" individuals (positive self, negative other) distance themselves from others, viewing themselves as self-reliant and invulnerable to rejection by others. (Eells, 2001, p. 133)

Those displaying attachment disorganization show signs of cognitive disorientation and/or dissociation and have often suffered from significant loss or abuse during childhood (Lyons-Ruth & Jacobvitz, 1999). It is thought that internal working models not only shape attachment styles but structure the content and organization of autobiographical attachment recollections, as well (Bowlby, 1969/1982; Main et al.,

1985; Sroufe, 1983).

Some American Buddhist teachers (Engler, 1986; Epstein, 1995; Kornfield, 1993; Welwood, 2000) have noted that American students often struggle during traditional Buddhist meditation practice with unresolved early developmental issues that East Asian students do not commonly report.

Mindfulness as a rule does not seem to facilitate uncovering in a psychological or psychodynamic sense in Asian students as it does in Western students. . . . With one minor exception, self-reports [of Indian Buddhists] were notable for the absence of just the kind of material that emerges for Western practitioners when censorship is lifted. (Engler, 2003, p. 46)

This present work assumes that cultural differences in the organization and expression of self may play a role in discrepancies reported between the practices of American and non-Western Buddhists (Engler, 2003). It also assumes that Zen Buddhist meditation practice potentially transforms long-term implicit attachment patterns generally presumed by attachment theorists to be relatively stable across time (Bowlby, 1973). In this study, the effect of Zen Buddhist practice on American practitioners' attachment styles and narrative accounts of early attachment experience with caregivers will be investigated both quantitatively and through narrative analysis, and results will be compared with those of American non-Buddhists.

In this exploration of attachment, a cross-cultural theory of human development will be taken into account (Baltes, Reuter-Lorenz, & Rosler, 2006; Conway, 2005; Harwood, Miller, & Irizarry, 1995; Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake, & Morelli, 2000; Valsiner, 1995; van Ijzendoorn & Sagi, 1999; Wang, 2004) in that a mutual interaction between culture and subjective experience will be acknowledged. In particular, this work will explore the influence of self-contained individualism, a social tradition dominant in



much of Western culture, on the experiences reported in the autobiographical narratives of Americans practicing Buddhism, a religion originating in East Asian cultures where interrelatedness and communal interactions have traditionally been favored over self-focused pursuits.

*Attachment Theory, Transpersonal Psychology, and American Buddhism*

In contemporary Western culture, the work of Bowlby (1969/1982, 1973, 1979, 1980a) brought to the forefront of psychology the far-reaching psychosocial implications of an infant's formative attachments to his or her caregivers. Since its emergence in the late 1960s, Bowlby's groundbreaking theory of attachment, expounded on by researchers such as Mary Ainsworth (1967, 1985), Ainsworth and Bell (1974), Ainsworth et al. (1978), C. George et al. (1984, 1985, 1996), Main et al. (1985), and others, has profoundly influenced clinical, developmental, cognitive, evolutionary, and social psychology, as well as research enterprises in neuropsychology and the psychology of religion (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999). Although Bowlby (1980b) openly expressed throughout his career his disenchantment with key components of psychoanalytic theory, he did uphold the psychoanalytic perspective that one's primary self-concept, concept of others, and manner of interpersonal functioning commences in early relational exchanges transpiring between parent and child and persists throughout the life course. The vast majority of psychological research ventures proceeding from Bowlby's work continues to emphasize that incipient childhood interactions with caregivers may, in combination with other factors, reasonably bear on later social development, mental health, affective regulation, and one's capacity for intimacy (Belsky & Nezworski, 1988; Bretherton, 1995; Cicchetti & Beeghly, 1990; Schore, 2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b; Siegal, 2001;

Sroufe, 1988, 1996; Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson, & Collins, 2005).

The field of transpersonal psychology, an offshoot of humanistic psychology arising from Abraham Maslow's (1971) investigations into peak experiences, acknowledges many diverse perspectives presented by the plethora of schools currently operating in mainstream Western psychology (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993). Nonetheless, research in the field of transpersonal psychology remains openly dedicated to a range of "experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (*trans*) the individual or personal" (p. 3), a perspective customarily dismissed by the conventional scientific establishment (Wade, 1996). Walsh and Vaughan (1993) note that transpersonal researchers often demonstrate particular interest in Buddhism, for it provides explicit procedures that aim to deconstruct one's normative conceptual representations of a separate, singular self.

Prominent contemporary researchers and clinicians in the field of transpersonal psychology such as Brown (1986), psychoanalyst Epstein (1995), Engler (1983, 1986, 2003), Kornfield (1993, 2000), Walsh (1981, 1983), and Welwood (2000), among others, have probed the intersection of the Western psychological paradigm with Buddhist practice in the United States. These authors and teachers have reported in their works a strikingly common feature found among many American Buddhists: When engaged in traditional Buddhist practice, a significant percentage of American students regularly contend with persistent, painful psychological distress that their East Asian counterparts reportedly seldom experience. Each of the above mentioned researchers observes that this phenomenon often impedes the deepening of meditation practice in its traditional form. Engler (2003) also notes that such issues are not widely addressed in ancient Buddhist

texts, which generally presume that practice begins with a “relatively intact ego” (Engler, 2003, p. 49). In concurrence with the causal developmental model underlying much of the Western psychological domain, Engler (1986), Epstein (1995), Kornfield (1993), and Welwood (2000) attribute the reported higher incidence of conflictual processes arising during the meditation practice of Americans in part to unresolved early developmental issues.

Americans do, undoubtedly, confront distinctive social and cultural challenges. For instance, child maltreatment is a widespread phenomenon in the United States, and its consequences are often tragic and long lasting (Briere, 1992). One such common consequence is the internalization of enduring negative self-evaluations. Numerous mental healthcare workers have noted that unfavorable self-evaluations adopted in childhood in abusive households often persist well into adulthood and are exceedingly difficult to modify through long-term therapeutic treatment (Briere, 1992). Indeed, in their first visits to the West, both the Dalai Llama and Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw expressed great surprise when they learned that many Americans harbor low self-esteem and self-hatred, as neither teacher had previously heard of this psychological phenomenon (Engler, 2003). In addition, Engler (2003) and Welwood (2000) remark that those raised in contemporary American society also face a historically novel developmental task in that they are culturally pressured to create a unique, autonomous identity independent from friends, family, and community. Markus and Kitayama (1991) and Wang (2004) suggest that such sociocultural pressures may deeply influence fundamental cognitive and emotional faculties even in the very early stages of development.

Nonetheless, it is challenging to assess whether United States citizens endure new and exclusive forms of suffering that so profoundly differ from those of Asian practitioners that Buddhist practice proves an impossible undertaking for Americans. According to Chinese historian and Zen Buddhist teacher Joan Sutherland Roshi (personal communication, 2006), the practice of Buddhism arose and flourished throughout regions in Asia when much of society was dominated by extreme forms of suffering and human cruelty, including warfare, famine, plague, torture, and slavery. Consequently, the primary goal of this work is not to investigate whether a “new type of suffering,” namely, “psychological suffering” (Engler, 2003, p. 45), or, more specifically, unresolved childhood attachment issues, might inhibit Americans from pursuing ancient traditional Buddhist meditation practices (Kearny, n.d.). Instead, this work poses the following question: How does Zen Buddhist meditation practice affect the attachment classifications and autobiographical component of American Zen Buddhists practitioners’ internal representations of early attachment experiences with caregivers when compared with those of American non-Buddhists?

#### *Purpose of Study*

This research serves an important purpose, for several reasons: (a) it may shed further light on an area currently not widely researched: the interplay between attachment bonding and the dominant American cultural climate of self-contained individualism in the synthesis of self/other representations, (b) it examines the influence attachment ties have upon American Buddhist practitioners from the perspective that individual subjective experience is inseparable from “transpersonal” phenomena, and (c) it investigates how the relationship between the parent-child attachment dyad and specific

spiritual practices in adulthood pertain to both transpersonal and mainstream psychology.

Regarding the first enumerated purpose for this research, noted in (a) above, attachment theorists and social and cultural psychologists have produced little empirical work exploring the reciprocal interrelationship between early parent-child attachment interactions and the genesis of socially and culturally circumscribed self/other-representations (Bretherton, 1995; Harwood, Miller, & Irizarry, 1995; Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake, & Morelli, 2000; Valisner, 1995; Wang, 2004). Bowlby and other attachment theorists suggest that attachment results from an evolutionarily inculcated neurobiological program producing specific patterns of infant behavior found cross-culturally that maximize the infant's chance for survival (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969/1982; Main et al., 1985; van Ijzendoorn & Sagi, 1999). Nevertheless, although attachment may be a biologically based phenomenon, this present work aligns with the perspective that many processes of human development are expressed differently from culture to culture, depending on the demands of a specific social environment. Furthermore, individual child-parent interactions also mutually influence and modify attachment styles that, in turn, alter the germination of individual self/other constructs (Baltes et al., 2006; Bretherton, 1995; Harwood et al., 1995; Rothbaum et al., 2000; Schore, 2001a; Triandis, 1989; Tucker, 1992; Valisner, 1995; Wang, 2004). In this present work, the term *culture* will be used broadly and will “include all aspects of the environment—physical, material, social, and symbolic” (Baltes et al., 2006, p. 3). Utilizing narrative analysis, the interface between early attachment experience and Western sociocultural forces in the creation of autobiographical narrative identity, as well as developmental shifts in this identity, as a function of Zen Buddhist practice may be

more clearly illuminated.

Concerning the second purpose of this research, noted in (b) above, many contemporary American Buddhist teachers teaching in the Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana, Dzogchen, and Zen Buddhist traditions (Chodron, 1997; Halifax, 1994; Huber, 1997; Kabat-Zinn, 2005; Kornfield, 1993, 2000; Sutherland, 2005, personal communication; Welwood, 2000) have suggested that the most *transpersonal* facets of human existence are concurrently intimately personal and rooted deeply in the phenomenal world. Depth psychotherapist Lionell Corbett (1996) and transpersonal theorist Jorge Ferrer (2002) offer analogous perspectives. Corbett states, “The important point . . . is that we locate the numinous within the deepest subjectivity of the individual, and we connect it with our psychological needs and difficulties” (p. 7). Similarly, Ferrer overtly criticizes numerous facets of the current transpersonal model, and, in advocating for a renewed participatory vision in transpersonal psychology, calls for a metamorphosis of the entrenched Cartesian dichotomy between spiritual and subjective experience.

In other words, as we become more aware of our intrinsic vital connection with the sacred, the transpersonal gradually reveals itself to us as more and more personal. In short, this is the shift from a Cartesian ego that experiences the sacred as “other” to a complete human being that naturally and spontaneously participates in the deeper, sacred dimensions of life. (Ferrer, 2002, p. xviii)

Likewise, Ferrer is not the first to raise objections pertaining to transpersonal inquiry. Others (J. Ellis & Yeager, 1989; Hendlin, 1983; May, 1986; Schneider, 1987, 2001; Taylor, 1992) have also questioned whether the transpersonal movement devalues practical personal concerns and/or rich existential issues in favor of transcendent states of consciousness.

This work refutes the prevailing vision that transpersonal phenomena encompasses only experiences extending “beyond the personal” (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993, p. 3) and instead aligns with those seeking to extend the scope of transpersonal psychology to include sacred dimensions immediately present in, beyond, through, and across the personal sphere (Ferrer, 2002; Valle, 1986). In response to criticism that “transpersonal psychology is centered on cosmic issues rather than human ones” (Koltko-Rivera, 1998, p. 71), this work maintains that the spiritual realm and the subjective developmental history of the individual are indivisible (Corbett, 1996; Ferrer, 2002). It explores the intersection of nascent interpersonal experiences with primary caretakers—typically understood in the Western psychological paradigm to be integral to the emergence of a cohesive, integrated sense of self (Guntrip, 1969; Kernberg, 1975, 1976; Kohut, 1977)—and a religion that is quickly gaining popularity in the United States: Zen Buddhism (Smith & Novak, 2003).

As for the third purpose of this research, noted in (c) above, although researchers and clinicians in the field of mainstream psychology often view the transformative potential of religious experience as being outside the scope of clinical practice, data suggests that growing numbers of individuals wish to discuss spiritual issues in the therapeutic setting (Rose, Westefeld, & Ansley, 2001). Empirical research also indicates that a close correlation exists between enhanced mental health and adult participation in spiritual affairs (L.K. George, Larson, Koenig, & McCollough, 2000; Koltko, 1989; Laurencelle, Abell, & Schwartz, 2002; Pargament, 2002; Westgate, 1996). In a related line of inquiry, Steger and Frazier (2005) have shown that religiousness and spiritual development confer overall well-being, the sense of having purpose in life, and optimal

mental health in adults and assert that mental health workers may better assist clients through attempting to gain a deeper understanding of how this occurs. In addition, there has also been growing interest in how Western psychological practitioners might draw on Buddhist traditions in particular for the enhancement of mental well-being (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). “We believe Buddhist insights can continue to be developed, enhanced, and adapted by Western psychological theory, expanding the horizons of both disciplines for the benefit of all” (Wallace & Shapiro, p. 699). Furthermore, the degree to which internal working models are malleable constructs has not been conclusively determined (Siegal, 2003). This proves relevant to the exploration of how a spiritual practice such as meditation, which has been empirically proven positively to influence many areas of emotional, physiological, and neurological functioning (Austin, 1998; Lazar, 2005), may alter behavioral patterns associated with specific attachment styles believed to persist across the lifespan (Klohen & Bera, 1998). These factors suggest that the effect an increasingly popular form of spiritual practice—meditation—has on early attachment experiences proves relevant to the fields of both transpersonal and mainstream psychology (Smith & Novak, 2003).

### *Research Questions*

Recognizing that transpersonal psychology has yet to surface as an integrated field in mainstream psychology, this present work implicitly attempts to reconcile transpersonal interests with more widely accepted psychological theory in order to expand the common ground between them. Aiming to examine the hypothesis presented by Engler (1986), Epstein (1995), Kornfield (1993), and Welwood (2000) that poor parenting serves as one variable contributing to difficulties Americans encounter when



attempting to deepen with traditional Buddhist practice, this undertaking explores the convergence of “transpersonal” pathways, or, more specifically, Zen practice, with early attachment experiences. Attempting to isolate singular causative factors for most forms of clinical distress presents inherent challenges, for human development is a complex, multifactorial process. Therefore, this study is intentionally limited in focus—it investigates how Zen practice affects the attachment styles and autobiographical component of American Zen Buddhist practitioners’ internal representations of early child-parent attachment bonds.

Attachment theorists currently understand internal working models to portend enduring representations of self and other that are perpetuated across the life course. Conversely, Zen Buddhist practice inherently challenges one’s habitual attachments to normative conceptual representations of self and other. Thus, this present work poses the question: How does Zen practice affect American practitioners’ attachment styles and the manner in which they describe their attachment experience with caregivers? This study will focus specifically on the attachment classifications and autobiographical narratives of American Zen Buddhist practitioners in order to investigate how they compare with those of American non-Buddhists.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter offers a theoretical and empirical review of foundational and contemporary attachment theory and its various applications in social and developmental psychology, neuropsychology, and the psychology of religion to elucidate a finding that inchoate parent-child attachment and long-term psychosocial functioning are meaningfully interrelated on multiple developmental levels. Taking into account that both attachment and sociocultural factors are purported to be instrumental in molding self/other representations (Bretherton, 1995; Wang, 2004), this chapter then reviews the paucity of data suggesting that attachment theory and sociocultural psychology, generally disparate domains, are best considered jointly. A brief overview of the social practices, behaviors, and traditions endemic to the individualistic climate in modern American society is also presented. Systems of memory inclusive of conceptual frameworks of self and autobiographical memory are outlined, as well. Finally, an overview of investigations conducted by contemporary researchers exploring the intersection of Buddhist practice with Western psychology in the United States is surveyed. This will illuminate a prospective parallel between Bowlby's (1969/1982, 1973, 1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1988) theory of attachment, considered in this study to be inseparable from one's sociocultural milieu, and the trials of Buddhist practice that is reportedly unique to Americans.

### *Overview of Attachment Theory*

*Bowlby and the attachment system.* In contemporary Western culture, Bowlby (1969/1982, 1973, 1979, 1980b, 1988) presented his theory of attachment as a substitute for the predominant object-relations psychoanalytic drive theories elucidating the mother-infant relationship (Kirkpatrick, 1992). Borrowing from research in the fields of

psychoanalysis, systems control, ethology, cognitive psychology, and information processing (Crowell, Fraley, & Shaver, 1999), Bowlby conceived of *attachment* as an inborn motivational and behavioral system prompting infants to evince repetitively an explicit set of behaviors in an effort to maintain constant proximity to primary caregivers. Since attachment behavior is strongly activated during periods of stress, danger, or when surroundings are unfamiliar, Bowlby viewed it as a biologically driven, evolutionary adaptation maximizing the infant's chances for protection and survival. Although Bowlby viewed the phenomenon of attachment as an instinctive, goal-specific behavioral complex, he recognized that the bonds forged through this system are psychologically internalized, enduring, and frequently accompanied by intense affect (Ainsworth, 1985). Infants and toddlers, Bowlby noted, form selective attachments to a very limited number of persons. "All such interactions, it is well to remember, [are] accompanied by the strongest of feelings and emotions, happy or the reverse" (Bowlby, 1969/1982, p. 242).

As the second tier in his attachment theory, Bowlby (1973) espoused the theory that, when principal caregivers demonstrate responsiveness, sensitive attunement, and collaborative communication in response to their offspring's attachment behaviors, the child mentally internalizes emotionally available others, a safe environment, and a valuable self. Ideally, the trusted principle caregiver then comes to serve as a secure base from which the child confidently explores his or her environment and a safe haven which he or she can return (Bowlby, 1988). "The pattern of attachment consistent with healthy development is that of secure attachment, in which the individual is confident that his parent (or parent-figure) will be available, responsive, and helpful should he encounter adverse or frightening situations" (Bowlby, 1988, p. 167). Conversely, when caregivers

consistently reject, ignore, or punish the child's bids for comfort and security, the child establishes a devalued sense of self, perceives his or her surroundings as hostile, and anticipates unavailable caregivers. In the latter case, Bowlby conjectured that the child's struggle to cope with compromised caretaking impairs the optimal trajectory of psychosocial development (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999; Bowlby, 1973; Siegal, 1999; Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986). "Clinical evidence suggests that, if it persists, this pattern leads to a variety of personality disorders from compulsive self-sufficiency to persistent delinquency" (Bowlby, 1988, p. 164).

Bowlby (1988) suggested that young children form (from cumulative attachment-oriented interactions) *internal working models*—approximately correct cognitive-affective representations reflecting the child's generalizations about his or her ongoing attachment experience. These allow children to generate predictions regarding caregiver availability and, thus, continually adapt to shifting environmental demands. "The use to which a model in the brain is put is to transmit, store, and manipulate information that helps in making predictions as to how what here are termed set-goals can be achieved" (Bowlby, 1969/1982, p. 80).

Bowlby conjectured that internal working models continually undergo reorganization as the child matures. As the child's capacity for interpersonal insight increases, internal working models exert an increasingly profound influence on the developing personality and behaviors of the child (Collins & Read, 1994). "However, the process is mediated by affect and is in the service of affect regulation, and it is certainly not conscious: The infant is not aware of the internal working model" (Cicchetti & Beeghly, 1990, p. 295). Internal working models, based on the overall emotional quality

of attachment-oriented interactions, develop into dynamic mental representations of the self, principal attachment figures, and the environment.

Each individual builds working models of the world and himself in it, with the aid of which he perceives events, forecasts the future, and constructs his plans. In the working models of the world that anyone builds a key feature is his notion of who his attachment figures are, where they may be found, and how they may be expected to respond. Similarly, in the working model of the self that anyone builds a key feature is his notion of how acceptable or unacceptable he himself is in the eyes of his attachment figures. (Bowlby, 1973, p. 203)

Central to Bowlby's theory is the proposition that established working models carry a persistent, long-term, and unconscious influence on all subsequent relationships. Bowlby posited that the development of internal working models, which are experientially generated at the onset of life and based on the overall quality of the parent-child attachment bond, hold significant consequences for later interpersonal and cognitive functioning.

First proposed by Bowlby (1973), and then later refined by Bretherton (1985) and by Main and her colleagues (Main, 1991; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985), internal "working models" of attachment are thought to be core features of personality that shape the manner in which the attachment system is expressed by directing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral response patterns. (Collins & Read, 1994, pp. 53-54)

Bowlby asserted that these deep cognitive-affective structures profoundly inform one's behavior throughout the life course, particularly in love relationships, as they implicitly and explicitly filter and organize one's intra- and interpersonal perceptions, expectations, behaviors, and beliefs. In short, Bowlby suggested that internal working models provide the cognitive scaffolding upon which all subsequent relationships are built. They transverse the life span of the individual and largely shape social, emotional, and personality development.

Bowlby warned (1988) that unfavorable working models germinating in hostile, negligent, dismissive, and/or abusive home environments prove particularly pathogenic, for they exhibit a high degree of resistance to modification and may produce considerable behavioral disturbance and distress.

Put briefly, and in my own words, the child, and later the adult, becomes afraid to allow himself to become attached to anyone for fear of a further rejection with all the agony, the anxiety, and the anger to which that would lead. As a result there is a massive block against expressing or even feeling his natural desire for a close trusting relationship, for care, comfort, and love—which I regard as the subjective manifestations of a major system of instinctive behavior. (Bowlby, 1988, p. 55)

In collaboration with Ainsworth, Bowlby (1973) postulated that *internal working models* do not constitute rigidly fixed representational systems. “They are called working ‘models’ or representations because they are the basis for action in attachment-related situations and because in principle they are open to revision as a function of significant attachment-related experiences” (Crowell et al., 1999, pp. 436-437). Ideally, internal working models are dynamic—they undergo active, effective change as the child’s developmental processes grow increasingly complex. This allows for the continual integration of novel relational and environmental stimuli, affective stability, and the broadening of emotional, social, and behavioral functioning, as the child ages.

Simultaneously, Bowlby (1973, 1979, 1988) also attributed a relative stability to working models. Mental representations, he suggested, must remain stable enough to allow the child to consistently process, regulate, and forecast experiences with caregivers. Minor lapses in attunement or availability do not produce major alterations in internal working models or destabilize the child’s sense of security; however, cumulative lapses in caretaking or radical shifts in the child’s environment, such as the sudden death of a

parent, will produce significant alterations in working models of attachment and often profoundly transform the behavior and relational patterns of the child.

Since the widespread publication of Bowlby's works, two researchers in particular, Ainsworth and Main, have made major contributions to Bowlby's initial understanding of attachment processes.

*Ainsworth and the "Strange Situation."* In 1950, researcher Ainsworth worked alongside Bowlby at the Tavistock Clinic in London evaluating the development of the child's personality following maternal estrangement in early childhood (Bretherton, 1992). Three years later, she traveled with her husband to Uganda, where she pursued her interest in infant developmental security by undertaking an exhaustive longitudinal study of mother-infant behavioral interactions. Several years later, drawing on her research in Uganda and her work with Bowlby, Ainsworth et al. (1978) published a paramount empirical study illuminating trenchant differences in parent-child attachment styles.

In the structured laboratory method that Ainsworth and colleagues named the "Strange Situation" (Ainsworth et al., 1974; Ainsworth et al., 1978), investigators repeatedly observed one of three discrete behavioral interchanges coalescing between mothers and their infants following a brief separation.

The Strange Situation is a 20-minute miniature drama with eight episodes. Mother and infant are introduced to a laboratory playroom, where they are later joined by an unfamiliar woman. While the stranger plays with the baby, the mother leaves briefly and then returns. A second separation ensues during which the baby is completely alone. Finally, the stranger and the mother return. (Bretherton, 1992, para. 52)

Ainsworth et al. (1978) found that the infants of mothers who had consistently shown a high degree of responsive attunement to the child's emotional and physical needs

in prior observations were easily consoled, and they greeted their mothers promptly on reunion with bids for affection. Infant-mother dyads exhibiting less affectionate relational interactions responded less favorably to the Strange Situation procedure. On the mother's return, these infants outwardly declined and avoided affectional gestures. They also expressed conflicted ambivalence toward their mother's return in that they anxiously sought proximity but demonstrated hostile resistance when finally provided with contact. Ainsworth et al. (1978) classified these groups as (a) secure (Group B), (b) avoidant (Group A), and (c) resistant/ambivalent (Group C). They asserted that the emergence of these distinctive attachment styles pivot on the mother's habitual style of caregiving—that is, her sensitivity toward, and willingness to, respond to her infant. Defining the attachment bond as an affectional tie “one individual has to another who is perceived as stronger and wiser” (Cassidy, 1999, p. 12) and capable of offering security, Ainsworth et al. (1978) understood the latter two categories [(b) and (c) above] to exemplify the child's organized preverbal attempts to minimize her or his distress in response to consistent failures in maternal care.

At home, the mothers of avoidant babies provided less affectionate holding during the first 3 months and frequently rejected bids for close bodily contact during the last quarter of the first year. . . . Mothers of ambivalent babies, by contrast, were inconsistently sensitive at home. Although they ignored their babies' signals, they did not reject close bodily contact. These findings suggest that a mother's sensitivity plays a major role in setting the tone of the relationship. (Bretherton, 1995, pp. 241-242)

Ainsworth and her colleagues demonstrated that children exhibit distinct, organized behavioral patterns in response to the overall quality of contact between themselves and their primary attachment figures. Consequently, the development of the Strange Situation allowed for a monumental opportunity: empirically to test and validate



Bowlby's basic theory of attachment. The collaboration between Ainsworth and Bowlby led to the advancement of the notion that "maternal sensitivity to infant signals" (Bretherton, 1992, para. 1) plays a profound role in the child-caregiver dyad. "Mary Ainsworth's innovative methodology not only made it possible to test some of Bowlby's ideas empirically but also helped expand the theory itself and is responsible for some of the new directions it is now taking" (Bretherton, 1992, para. 1).

*Main and the Adult Attachment Interview.* In 1985, Ainsworth's student Main and her colleagues launched an important new phase in the field of attachment with the publication of a work entitled *Security in Infancy, Childhood, and Adulthood: A Move to the Level of Representation*. In this work, Main et al. (1985) introduced the formulation of an open-ended, interview-based measure called the Adult Attachment Interview devised to elucidate and classify parents' internal conceptualizations regarding major attachment figures. "It was not until the advent of the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI; C. George, Kaplan, & Main, 1984, 1985, 1996) . . . that representational processes as the likely mediator of differences in parental caregiving behavior were fully comprehended and made accessible to investigation" (Hesse, 1999, p. 395).

The Adult Attachment Interview entails an inquiry into salient parental recollections of childhood attachment figures and attachment-related circumstances such as death, separation, and prolonged illness. Additionally, a request for descriptors portraying the overall quality of one's childhood relationship with parents is made, along with a query about how these significant childhood attachments impact present-day relational strategies. Interviewers classify subjects into a secure or insecure group depending on how narratives are presented (Main, 2000; Main et al., 1985).

Main et al. (1985) noted that insecure parents remained conflicted in regard to early negative attachment experiences and offered incomplete, incoherent recollections of childhood memories. These parents represented either dismissive or a preoccupied attachment status. Dismissive parents often poorly recollected, or forgot entirely, details pertaining to childhood events, and they habitually minimized the importance of early attachment experiences.

Interviewers are classified as “dismissing” when discourse appears aimed at minimizing the discussion of attachment-related experiences. . . . Descriptions of parents are most often favorable to highly favorable . . . however, those classified as dismissing fail to provide supportive evidence for these positive representations. . . . Speakers falling in this category have repeatedly been found to have children classified as avoidant. (Hesse, 1999, p. 397)

Preoccupied parents consistently failed to offer an integrated framework of attachment experience and appeared emotionally burdened by negative past experiences with principal caregivers.

In many cases, therefore, the memories aroused, rather than the intent of the question itself, appear to the subject’s attention. . . . Among some preoccupied speakers, this is evidenced in lengthy, angry discussions of childhood interactions with the parent(s). . . . Infants of these speakers are typically judged resistant/ambivalent. (Hesse, 1999, p. 398)

Conversely, Main et al. (1985) observed that those in the secure/autonomous group offered clear discourse and spoke with relative ease about previous attachment-related issues and circumstances, regardless of whether experiences had been negative or positive. They also generally indicated an appreciation for the value of attachment experience. Main et al. found that those who properly sequenced chronological events, remembered details accurately, and spoke of experiences clearly and articulately showed secure attachment patterns, despite the painful content of recollections. “What is most

striking about this association is that it suggests that the form in which an individual presents his or her life narrative (regardless of content) predicts caregiving behavior in highly specific and systematic ways” (Hesse, 1999, p. 398).

Main et al. (1985) additionally revealed that a correlation (.075) exists between the attachment status of the parents and the attachment behaviors of the child, as shown by the Strange Situation (Hesse, 1999). The findings of Main et al. illustrated that infants with a parent classified as secure/autonomous in the AAI interview exhibited secure (Group B) behaviors, such as actively greeting the parent upon reunion and expressing willingness for close interaction. Children of a dismissive parent demonstrated ambivalence toward separation and most often avoided parental contact following reunion. Thus, they fell into an avoidant (Group A) classification. Resistant-ambivalent (Group C) patterns of behavior, such as anger, prolonged crying, and continual protest, primarily arose in children with parents categorized by the AAI as preoccupied. Consequently, Main et al. (1985) unequivocally demonstrated that patterns of attachment perpetuate from mother to child through intergenerational transmission (Hesse, Main, Abrams, & Rifkin, 2003). Additionally, Main et al. offered evidence that toddler “Strange Situation” classifications remain stable between ages 1 through 6 years.

Following the development of the Adult Attachment Interview, Main and Solomon (1986, 1990) introduced a fourth category of attachment style—disorganized/disoriented. Characterized by an ominous array of odd, conflicted, and inexplicable behaviors, disorganized infants overwhelmingly display fear when in the presence of the primary caregiver (Hesse et al., 2003).

Here, we describe the “fright without solution” (Kaplan, 1987; Main & Hesse, 1992) which, then, might well occur when the parent—normally the infant’s biologically channeled “haven of safety”—simultaneously becomes the source of alarm (Hesse & Main, 1999, 2000). Such experiences should be inherently disorganizing, affecting emotion, behavior, and attention; it would not be surprising if vulnerability to psychopathology is significantly increased in the face of repeated early experiences of unsolvable fear. (p. 69)

The works of Bowlby (1969/1982, 1973, 1979, 1980a, 1988), Ainsworth (1967), Ainsworth and Bell (1974), Ainsworth et al. (1974), Ainsworth et al. (1978) and Main et al. (1985) offered landmark insights into the nature of the parent-child bond. Critics of attachment theory contend that Bowlby overlooked factors such as biological vulnerability, medical complications, temperament, genetic predispositions, resilience, trauma, and handicaps unrelated to parental care in his evolutionary premise (Fonagy, 1999). Nonetheless, a substantial body of research exploring the origins and underpinnings of the self and their relationship to psychopathology has shown that early attachment interactions reasonably correlate with adult mental health and affect regulation (Bretherton, 1995). Empirical evidence, which will be reviewed next, supports that patterns of insecure and disorganized attachment in infancy, when combined with other influences, can often be “probabilistically linked to later psychological disorder” (Sroufe, 1997, p. 263). To elucidate that inchoate parent-child attachment and long-term psychological health are meaningfully interrelated, a select few of these numerous studies will be briefly reviewed.

#### *Empirical Research Investigating Attachment From Infancy to Adulthood*

*Attachment theory and developmental neuropsychology.* Cognitive neuroscientists researching the neurological basis of attachment have generated persuasive evidence that early attachment experience has considerable long-term effects

on human neurodevelopment. Indeed, even decades before the advent of neuroscience, Spitz (1945, 1946, 1965) offered, in a series of grim testimonies, the bleak outcome for infants and young children to whom the monumental reality of close human contact is denied. Spitz (1945, 1946) observed that young children in institutionalized settings who were explicitly deprived of physical affection and emotional warmth, despite having basic physical needs met, suffered from grave neurological dysfunctions and died en masse.

After separation from their mothers, these children went through the stages of progressive deterioration . . . after the relatively brief period of three months . . . motor retardation became fully evident; the children became completely passive; they lay supine in their cots. They did not achieve the stage of motor control. . . . We continued to observe these children at longer intervals up to the age of four years. . . . With a few exceptions, these children cannot sit, stand, walk, or talk. (Spitz, 1965, p. 278)

In the field of contemporary developmental neuroscience, leading neuropsychologists Schore (1994, 1996, 1997, 2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b, 2003), Siegel (1995, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2003), and Siegel and Solomon (2003) argue that crucial aspects of an infant's neurodevelopmental progression and emotional and executive functioning pivot upon the infant's relationship with a sensitive, emotionally attuned caregiver. Although their works are too numerous to be reviewed thoroughly, a brief synopsis will be presented.

Siegel (1999) has deemed the relationship between attachment theory and neural integration an "interpersonal neurobiology," and he offers "an integrated view of how human development occurs within the social world in transaction with the functions of the brain that give rise to the mind" (Siegel, 2001, p. 67). The works of Schore (1994, 1996, 1997, 2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b, 2003) and Siegel (1995, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2003) provide striking physical evidence revealing that frequent, warm contact between

child and parent in the first 2 years of life generates a critical neural foundation essential for subsequent development.

In a number of works I offer evidence to show that attachment experiences, face-to-face transactions of affect synchrony between caregiver and infant, directly influence the imprinting, the circuit wiring of the orbital prefrontal cortex, a coticolimbic area that is known to begin a major maturational change at 10 to 12 months and to complete a critical period of growth from the middle to the end of the second year. (Schore, 2000a, p. 30)

These researchers painstakingly demonstrate that the proper organization and growth of key neural pathways in the neonate's orbitofrontal cortex hinge on the empathic responsiveness of the caregiver. The formation of these basic neural circuits, which develop more quickly in the first 2 years than at any other time in the human life span, allows for the subsequent development of a plethora of crucial mental functions, inclusive of the regulation of the autonomic nervous system and patterns of affective representation (Siegal & Solomon, 2003). "These processes include the generation and regulation of emotion, the capacity for 'response flexibility,' or, mindful reflective behavior (Siegal, 1999), the autobiographical sense of self and the construction of a 'self-narrative' . . . and the ability to engage in interpersonal communication" (Siegal, 2001, p. 73). Schore and Siegal agree that the constant, close social and physical rapport between the caregiver and child confers in the infant the capacity to regulate emotional expression. In other words, infants who are calmed and soothed by caregivers learn to calm and soothe themselves, and this requires that the parent be attuned to the child the majority of the time. Schore (2001a) and others maintain that the dysregulation of emotional states lies at the core of most forms of clinical psychopathology. Hence, these authors uniformly agree that a healthy, nurturing child-caregiver relationship ultimately grants a stable sense of self to

the developing infant.

These rich studies highlight the tremendous implications of the interplay between receptive, responsive parental contact and optimal psychobiological development for the infant. “During the critical period of maturation in the first two years, prolonged episodes of intense and unregulated interactive traumatic stress induce not only heightened negative affect, but chaotic biochemical alterations that produce a developmentally immature, structurally defective right brain” (Schoore, 2001b, p. 237). Given data that recurrent empathic failures in parental caregiving potentially impair the development of the infant’s maturing brain and that these neurophysiological aberrations have a long-term impact on brain regulatory systems (Schoore, 2001b), the integration of attachment theory and neuroscience offers an enriched understanding of the development of psychopathology.

Although attachment behaviors manifest during all life stages, attachment is most immediately observable in infants and toddlers, due to the fact their most basic safety and survival needs depend on the constant proximity of primary caregivers (Main, 2000). “First attachments are ordinarily formed by seven months, and attachments develop with respect to only one or a few persons” (Main, 2000, p. 1060). Because attachment responses are regularly and overtly expressed by infants, empirical studies examining the continuity of organized attachment patterns are quite numerous for children who are 0 to 2 years of age. Although infants are not neurologically capable of continually sustaining alert, reciprocal interactions with others until at least 6 months of age (Sroufe, 1996), data suggest that the emotional quality of the attachment relationship between the caregiver and child, in even the earliest months of life, critically bears on infant mental health

(Schore, 2001a, 2001b). “From late pregnancy through the second year, the brain is in a critical period of accelerated growth . . . and so it requires . . . regulated interpersonal experiences for optimal maturation” (Schore, 2001a, p. 11).

*Empirical attachment studies from infancy to adolescence.* The most common assessment used to measure attachment security in infancy and early childhood is Ainsworth et al.’s (1974, 1978) Strange Situation. As discussed previously in this work, this measure empirically demonstrates that, after a brief separation, the majority of securely attached infants happily greet their mothers upon reunion, insecure-avoidant infants generally ignore and resist their mothers’ attempts to reconnect upon reunion, and insecure-resistant (ambivalent) infants often cry during separation and are not easily consoled upon reunion.

A secure infant is able to use one or a few attachment figures as a secure base from which to explore and have as a haven of safety in retreat and is confident in this person’s availability, responsiveness, and competence to serve as a secure base. (Waters et al., 2000, p. 679)

The Minnesota Study of Risk and Adaptation From Birth to Adulthood (Sroufe et al., 2005) utilized Ainsworth’s Strange Situation procedure to assess infants at 12 and 18 months of age to see if their attachment style changed in this time period. Of the 189 dyads assessed, 74 % of the secure group remained secure, approximately half of avoidant infants remained avoidant, and 37% of the resistant group remained resistant. In the same study, infants with parents rated as psychologically unavailable showed a dramatic decline in overall development on Bayley Scales of Infant Development (Sroufe et al., 2005). Other empirical findings confirm that infants demonstrating patterns of behavior associated with secure attachment exhibit an increased ability to regulate affect, higher



sociability, and greater compliance with parental requests in the first 2 years of life (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bretherton, 1995). Carlson and Sroufe's study (as cited in Greenberg, 1999) shows that insecure attachment prior to age 2 correlates with lower sociability, increased peer conflict, more frequent displays of anger, and reduced behavioral self-control during the preschool years and beyond. Research conducted by Weinfeld, Sroufe, and Egeland (as cited in Solomon & George, 1999) shows a dramatic drop in attachment stability in high-risk poverty samples. "Thus, it appears that long-term continuity should not be expected in samples that have undergone major changes in family functioning or status and/or when the family is under chronic stress" (Solomon & George, 1999, p. 294). Overall, substantial research suggests that the stability of secure versus insecure classifications remains quite high in infants from ages 0 to 2 years who do not endure major trauma or prolonged separation from caregivers.

In preschool and kindergarten age children, internal representations of self, other, and relationships extend beyond implicit (emotional, behavioral, perceptual, and somatic) memory systems and become represented explicitly, as well (Siegal, 2001). "By the middle of the second year, children begin to develop a second form of memory, 'explicit memory' (Bauer, 1996). Explicit memory includes two major forms: factual (semantic) and autobiographical (episodic) (Tulving, Kapur, Craik, Moscovitch, & Houle, 1994)" (Siegal, 2001, p. 74). As neurological functioning grows increasingly complex and the left hemisphere of the brain matures, attachment conceptualizations become associated with emergent linguistic systems and the sense of a temporal self (Siegal, 2001). "The acquisition of language introduces the possibility of communicating about goal states and adds words and conversation to the child's attachment" (Kobak & Duemmler, 1994, p.

126). Thus, the consistent overall emotional quality of the parent-child relationship remains crucial in the evolution of internal working models in young children.

Variations of the traditional Ainsworth classification system have been utilized in an effort to assess the continuity of attachment-related behavioral organization in pre-school age children (Solomon & George, 1999; Sroufe et al., 2005). Sroufe (1996) upholds that children who consistently lack attentive, emotionally attuned care in infancy possess as toddlers fewer psychosocially adaptive strategies to regulate affect and behavior. He posits that young children often display insecure attachment in the form of emotional defense strategies that include anxiety, excessive dependency, passivity, hostility, and pervasive social and emotional detachment and alienation. Lacking in ego-resiliency and the capacity for consistent emotional regulation,

[Children] with histories of anxious attachment tend to have difficulties with managing emotional challenges of peer relationships. Those with avoidant histories were often emotionally distant from or hostile with other children. They exhibited the most frequent unprovoked aggression and at other times behaved in exploitative or hurtful ways toward others. (Sroufe, 1996, p. 226)

Conversely, on rating scales and a Q-sort-derived index of ego-resiliency, young children assessed as securely attached in infancy were ranked as better behaved and more expressive, curious, confident, emotionally stable, and compliant when compared with those with insecure attachment backgrounds (Sroufe, 1996). Cicchetti and Beeghly (1990) report similar findings: “Those with avoidant histories, in spite of a seeming precocious independence (or rather, because of a pronounced absence of dyadic affect regulation), later are lacking in self-reliance and in fact are viewed . . . as highly emotionally dependent” (p. 298). In the Minnesota Study of Risk and Adaptation From Birth to Adulthood (Sroufe et al., 2005), toddlers with a cumulative history of maltreatment were

found to be less attentive, more easily frustrated, and generally non-compliant.

Children . . . who already lack confidence regarding care, leave this developmental period even more challenged than when it began. . . . Such trajectories are by no means fixed. . . . Still, by age 2, there are discernible developmental trajectories. They represent a force in development. (Sroufe et al., 2005, p. 120)

Adaptation in middle childhood will not be covered in depth, due to the fact few measures have been developed to assess the internal working models that have been established in children between the ages of 3 and 10 years (Greenberg, 1999). One of the few studies available, the Minnesota Study of Risk and Adaptation From Birth to Adulthood (Sroufe et al., 2005), reports that the majority of middle-aged children with consistently secure attachment relationships to caregivers in infancy and preschool showed greater ego resiliency and agency than those with early insecure patterns of attachment. This study shows that securely attached children formed and sustained a greater number of close, stable friendships and more skillfully navigated peer relationships. They were also more compliant and more likely to be successful when undertaking challenging projects.

A variety of studies have been conducted on the continuity of attachment classifications from infancy to adolescence as interest in the development, transformation, and revision of internal working models across the life span has grown (Ammaniti, van Ijzendoorn, Speranza, & Tambelli, 2000). Much of the attachment research focusing on the developmental stage of adolescence examines whether attempts to establish greater independence from parents through an increasing reliance on peer groups produces shifts in the organization of earlier established attachments to primary caregivers. Utilizing a revised variation of the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI), (C. George et al., 1984, 1985,

1996) called the Attachment Interview for Childhood and Adolescence (AICA), Ammaniti et al. (2000) conducted a longitudinal study on 10- and 14-year-olds examining Bowlby's (1988) hypothesis that attachment bonds established during infancy and early childhood persist into adolescence. The stability of attachment security from 10 to 14 years of age was found to be 74% ( $k = .48$ ).

The stability of attachment across four years in our study is particularly cogent not only for the long test-retest period, but also because it refers to the period of late childhood and early adolescence when major changes take place in the body and sexual functioning as well as in the affective and cognitive fields. (Ammaniti et al., p. 340)

A study conducted by Kobak and Duemmler (1994) assessed the internal working models of teenagers using the AAI. They found that adolescents rated as secure showed less anger, more willingness to solve problems, and greater cooperative discourse with parents. Allen and Land (1999) remark in their report of the study's results that adolescents did not discover greater autonomy by severing ties with parents but rather built new relationships with peers on the foundation of secure attachment-oriented relations with parents. They state that teenagers classified as exhibiting preoccupied and dismissing strategies showed a higher propensity toward drug use, the internalization of problems, deviant behaviors, and academic struggles. Warren, Huston, Egeland, and Sroufe (1997) conclusively established a strong association between anxious/resistant attachment in infancy and anxiety disorders in teenagers. A groundbreaking longitudinal study conducted by Carlson (1998) revealed a similar finding. Her study showed a decisive link between disorganized attachment organization in infancy and dissociative symptomatology and anxiety disorders in adolescents. "Such simple predictability from infant behavior to disturbance at age 17 is unprecedented" (Carlson, 1998, p. 1122). In a

20-year longitudinal study conducted by Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell, and Albersheim (2000), 72% of participants received the same secure versus insecure attachment classification at age 20 that they had received in infancy.

Attachment researchers do not currently know the degree to which internal working models of infants and children are resistant to modification, or if alterations are more likely to occur at specific stages of development (Greenberg, 1999). They do, though, suggest that internal working models become increasingly fixed with age. “As working models stabilize, they serve as a conservative force that resists change by biasing perception of the actions and desires of others (Bowlby, 1973)” (Greenberg, 1999, p. 482).

The research reviewed in this work indicates that attachment patterns in infants, toddlers, children, and adolescents display a marked continuity and coherence across the early life span. These studies suggest that empathic bonding experiences in infancy that continue into early life directly correlate with the development of positive internal working models of self and other that lead to greater confidence, trust, and social adaptability throughout childhood and adolescence. Insecure attachment patterns appear to produce internal working models based on fear, anger, and mistrust (Main, 1995) that, once concretized, lay the groundwork for the development of maladaptive interpersonal strategies and disruptive, defiant, and pathological behaviors. Researchers such as Schore (1994, 1996, 1997, 2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b, 2003) and Siegel (1995, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2003) suggest that inconsistent, abusive, and/or neglectful caregiving in infancy may significantly alter early neurodevelopmental pathways, and this may account for the strong continuity between early and later attachment patterns and adult psychopathology.

*Empirical attachment studies in adulthood.* Drawing on Bowlby's hypothesis that attachment theory can be extended to adult relationships via internal working models, the seminal works of Hazan and Shaver (1987, 1994a, 1994b), Shaver and Hazan (1988), and Shaver, Hazan, and Bradshaw (1988) provide a meaningful link between early attachment patterns and the attachment style of adults in romantic love relationships. They demonstrate that American adults in romantic love relationships adopt one of three major patterns of attachment behavior closely resembling Ainsworth et al.'s (1978) three infant-mother attachment classifications: secure, anxious/ambivalent, and avoidant. Furthermore, the frequency of these three attachment styles was found to be equivalent in adults and infants. Their findings also revealed that one's attachment status in childhood, as determined through self-report, directly correlated with one's behavior in adult romantic relationships, insofar as those reporting insecure childhood attachment frequently struggled more often with romantic intimacy. "People with different attachment orientations entertain different beliefs about the course of romantic love, the availability and trust-worthiness of love partners, and their own love-worthiness" (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, p. 521). Overall, their study offered support for the continuity of attachment-related behavioral strategies across the life span.

Hazen and Shaver's (1987) preliminary results initiated a proliferation of research focusing on adult attachment patterns and the exploration of adult love partnerships as attachment processes and, thus, heralded the emergence of an important theory in the field of attachment. In 1994, Collins and Read conducted a study expanding on the work of Hazan and Shaver (1987). A multi-item scale called the Adult Attachment Scale was constructed based on the self-report measure devised by Hazan and Shaver, and three

measurable dimensions emerged—(a) Close, (b) Depend, and (c) Anxiety—which correlated with Ainsworth et al.'s (1978) infant attachment classifications. Collins and Read provided evidence that internal working models in adults correlate with the organization of memories and perceptions related to early parental attachment.

“Attachment theory reminds us that close relationships in adulthood cannot be fully understood without reference to social and emotional experiences that came before” (Collins & Read, 1994, p. 84). They proposed that internal working models included four interrelated aspects: (a) memories of attachment-related experiences with caregivers, (b) beliefs and expectations about the self and other in relationship to others, (c) goals and needs, and (d) strategies of getting needs met (Klohn & Bera, 1998). Finally, they demonstrated that one's score of Close, Depend, or Anxiety likely indicated a behavior pattern that likely influenced the selection of a dating partner, inasmuch as those scoring Close were more likely to select partners who were comfortable with intimacy and closeness, and those with insecure scores tended to select insecurely attached dating partners.

While Hazan and Shaver (1987, 1994a, 1994b) and Collins and Read (1994) based their research on individual differences in adult attachment style on Ainsworth et al.'s (1978) three-category model of attachment, Bartholomew (1990) argued that adult attachment could be conceptualized using a four-category model. Borrowing from Ainsworth et al. (1978), Hazan and Shaver (1987, 1994a, 1994b), and Main et al. (1985), she put forward the idea that secure individuals hold a positive view of self and others, preoccupied individuals hold a negative view of self and a positive view of others, dismissing individuals hold a positive view of self and a negative view of others, and

fearful-avoidant individual view both themselves and others in a negative manner (Crowell, Fraley, & Shaver, 1999). In 1991, Bartholomew and Horowitz developed the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ) based on these four conceptual dimensions, and this became a widely used instrument in the assessment of attachment.

In a 31-year longitudinal study, Klohnen and Bera (1998) collected attachment data from women at ages 21, 27, 43, and 52. Although attachment classifications were obtained only at age 21, life data, observer descriptions, and self-report measures were used at every subsequent data collection period. Evidence strongly indicated that behavioral patterns associated with specific attachment styles persisted across the life span. “The present findings begin to fill in some much needed empirical support for the crucial assumption of long-term continuity of attachment styles” (Klohnen & Bera, 1998, p. 220). Additionally, Klohnen and Bera discovered that the number of siblings in the family, as well as the origin and the size of the community in which participants grew up, successfully predicted attachment in midlife, to the extent that those with more siblings raised in small communities tended to forge secure attachment bonds in later life.

The findings of Granqvist (1998), Kirkpatrick (1992, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999), and Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) indicated that certain facets of Christians’ relationship with God strongly correlated with the security of their childhood attachment. Kirkpatrick offered the notion that attachment theory provides an important framework for understanding Christianity and other religious belief systems. Granqvist’s research showed that those with insecure attachment histories placed more emphasis on their religious beliefs in adulthood than did secure believers. “In addition, insecure respondents who had experienced low parental religiousness were more religious, more likely to



perceive themselves as having a close relationship with God, expressed more theistic beliefs, and reported a higher level of religious change during adulthood” (Granqvist, 1998, p. 350). Granqvist also presented evidence for a compensation theory of adult religiosity. His findings revealed that, for those with insecure attachment histories, religious practices frequently served as an attempt to gain an otherwise absent sense of security and to regulate emotional distress. The findings reported in the works of Kirkpatrick (1992, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999) and Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) illustrated that an individual’s personal relationship with God may be strongly influenced by an insecure attachment history. Kirkpatrick subsequently suggested that, for those with insecure attachment histories, God may serve as an important substitute attachment figure. Subsequently, he proposed that internal working models of attachment may offer an important frame of reference for researchers exploring the psychology of religion.

Specifically, it seems that the idea of a personal god to whom one submits and in whom one places faith—in return for salvation and a sense of security—is practically irresistible to human beings around the globe. To the extent that religious beliefs include such a component, it seems reasonable to assert that attachment dynamics may lie behind and shape the religious experiences of these individuals. (Kirkpatrick, 1995, p. 465)

Although individual differences in attachment security in infant-parent dyads do not conclusively forecast later development, research presented in this present work provides evidence that continued maladaptive attachment bonds may hold substantial developmental significance. When combined with other risk factors, they are “probabilistically associated with [and] seem to have implications for a range of disturbances” (Sroufe, 1997, p. 263). Data indicate that definitive individual behavioral styles based on attachment-related exchanges emerge from the interpersonal matrix of

caregiver(s) and child, and research reveals that these styles of attachment lay the groundwork for later developmental trajectories that, once firmly established, may govern long-term social and affective functioning.

*Attachment Theory, Culture, and Individualism*

Curiously, although research explicating the short- and long-term impact individual differences in attachment have on later mental health abounds, attachment theorists have produced little work surveying the interrelationship between attachment and sociocultural influences (Bretherton, 1995; Harwood et al., 1995; Rothbaum et al., 2000; Valisner, 1995). Regarding this research gap, Bretherton (1995) has this suggestion:

I suggest that the two approaches could profitably cross-fertilize each other, with social constructivists paying attention to issues of defense and mental health . . . and attachment theorists examining how different cultures socialize attachment and other interpersonal behaviors in relation to their adult ideal of mental health. (p. 258)

Harwood et al. (1995) offer similar research advice:

From this perspective, the study of meaning is a common enterprise, but the mental health meanings of individual differences in attachment can only be understood against the backdrop of the larger cultural meanings given by different groups to desirable and undesirable child behavior. . . . The study of other cultural belief systems may give us alternative normative frameworks within which to understand the culturally specific significance of individual differences in attachment behavior. (p. 35)

The next section of this study explores a co-constructionist approach to human development and then offers a summary of the individualistic zeitgeist which currently dominates American cultural identity. Research investigating the relationship between individualism and the construction of self/other representations is also examined.

In the co-constructive approach, independent elements are understood to influence and modify one another through a mutually dependent, co-productive process (Baltes et al., 2006). The co-constructionist perspective upheld in this work recognizes that the person and the cultural environment operate as interdependent factors in the production of psychological processes. “Culture here ceases to be an ‘external agent’ relative to the developing person but becomes intricately linked with every aspect of action and symbol construction in a person’s life” (Valisner, 1995, p. 15). Hence, culture and development are conceptualized in this study as interrelated and, yet, simultaneously independent vectors with respect to psychological functioning. This allows for the consideration that attachment and culture cannot be segregated into dualistically oppositional elements when dissecting the origins of self/other representation. Psychotherapist and author Philip Cushman (1995) echoes this perspective in the following statement:

Studying humans by abstracting them from their cultural context and observing them in a dispassionate, putatively objective manner in the psychological laboratory is more akin to removing a fish from water than picking up a rock from its resting place. . . . Individuals and their context form a dialogical, interpenetrating *unit*. (p. 17).

Bowlby presented the attachment relationship between infant and caregiver as a biologically based system. Hence, it has been widely assumed in the study of attachment that Ainsworth et al.’s (1974, 1978) configurations of the mother-infant attachment relationship may be found globally, regardless of culture or child-rearing practices. Indeed, available evidence (van Ijzendoorn & Sagi, 1999) shows that at least three styles of attachment as explicated by Ainsworth et al. (1974) do in fact occur cross-culturally, further supporting Bowlby’s (1969/1982) supposition that infant attachment represents a universal evolutionary development common to all human beings. “Avoidant, secure, and

resistant attachments have been observed in African, Chinese, and Japanese studies. . . . secure attachment is not just a North American invention or a Western ideal, but rather a widespread and preferred phenomenon” (van Ijzendoorn & Sagi, 1999, p. 728).

Researchers Posada et al. (1995) provide similar evidence. They found that mothers in seven different cultures prefer their children to behave in a manner consistent with Bowlby’s (1973) and Ainsworth’s (1978) definition of secure attachment with the mother serving as a secure base for exploration. Studies conducted in Africa (Kermoian & Leiderman, 1986; Konner, 1977; Marvin, VanDevender, Iwanaga, LeVine, & LeVine, 1977; Morelli & Tronick, 1991; True, 1994), China (Posada et al., 1995), Japan (Durrett, Otaki & Richards, 1984; Takahashi, 1986) and Israel (Sagi, van Ijzendoorn, Aviezer, Donnell, & Mayseless, 1994) show that the distribution of the secure attachment classification ranges between 61% and 69% in 36 global samples. “What seem to be universal are the general cultural pressures toward the selection of the secure attachment pattern in the majority of children, and the preference for the secure child in parents across cultures” (van Ijzendoorn & Sagi, 1999, p. 730). The previously reviewed works of Schore (1994, 1996, 1997, 2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b, 2003) and Siegel (1995, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2003) also offer further evidence for a biologically based theory of attachment, because they examine attachment as a fundamental component for optimal neurodevelopment.

On the other hand, when considering attachment in various cultural settings, co-constructivists emphasize the importance of recognizing that infants develop within a parent/child dyad that cannot be extricated from the cultural matrix. “It is important to note that the idea of personal identity is a culturally based phenomenon (e.g., Markus &

Kitayama, 1991) because identity is developed through repeated social interactions and participation in culturally relevant activities, which can differ markedly (e.g., Brunner, 1990; Miller, Mintz, Hoogstra, Fung, & Potts, 1992; Rogoff, 1990)” (McClean, 2005, p. 689). The process of human development interfaces continually with omnipresent cultural surroundings, and vice versa. “Thus, socialization experiences and the self-focus that predominates in a culture may influence the accessibility of earliest memories and their content” (Conway, 2005, p. 10).

Even instinctive, biologically based functions such as the attachment system are affected and modified through continuous engagement with the pervasive social framework. Harwood et al. (1995) emphasize that “race, ethnicity, social class, religious affiliation, family composition, school environment, community make-up and broader regional and national forces (e.g., the mass media)” (p. 31) must not be overlooked when considering human development. Wang (2004) also emphasizes that the development of the self is neither strictly neurobiological, nor entirely dependent in relation to the immediate social environment. Rather, she states, culture has a far-reaching effect on the “content and style of children’s autobiographical memories and self-descriptions” (p. 13) embedded in the construction of the self from the very beginning. “We do not deny the biological and evolutionary predispositions that underlie attachment, but we claim that biology and culture are inseparable aspects of the system within which a person develops” (Rothbaum et al., 2000, pp. 1095-1096).

The coconstructivist understanding proves particularly relevant in this present work, as this study examines why Americans may encounter with Buddhist practices difficulties seldom reported by Asian students. Most cultural psychologists agree that

Asia and the Western world represent two highly diverse cultural traditions in which individuals “may hold strikingly divergent construals of the self, others, and the interdependence of the two” (Markus & Kitayam, 1991, p. 224). Markus and Kitayama argue that divergent social and cultural values influence aspects of human functioning such as cognition, emotion, and motivation previously assumed to be “culture-free.” The findings in this present study support a co-constructivist perspective that a cross-cultural theory of human development must acknowledge that a mutual interaction between culture and the individual gives rise to psychological processes and determines the configuration of intra- and interpersonal relationships. “This conceptual renovation needs to overcome the external oppositional nature of the *culture* and *person* relationship and replace it by one that concentrates on viewing culture within the psychological structure of a person as a systematic organizer of psychological function” (Valisner, 1995, p. 11).

Attachment theorists purport that early attachment experience plays a crucial role in shaping psychosocial and affective development (Belsky & Nezworski, 1988); however, some (Bretherton, 1995; Harwood et al., 1995; Rothbaum et al., 2000) contend that Western attachment theorists regularly neglect cultural biases inherent in their research pursuits. For example, Harwood et al. (1995) observe that Westerners often confuse the sense of safety and security an infant derives from a secure attachment bond with Western cultural preferences. They note that, although many Western mothers encourage autonomy and self-reliance in their children and associate these traits with healthy development, mothers in Japanese culture show a preference for children who exhibit particular expressions of dependence on parents well into adulthood (van Ijzendoorn & Sagi, 1999).

In particular, the concept of inner security, with its emphasis on the importance of self-sufficiency and inner resourcefulness for the autonomous, bounded individual . . . is an idea peculiar to dominant US culture . . . that is not shared by much of the world. (Harwood et al., 1995, pp. 36-37)

Insofar as patterns of relating manifest through interactions with important others, social and cultural norms circumscribe even the earliest interpersonal exchanges.

Although attachment may be a universal human phenomenon, the values and goals endemic to a culture tend to define what constitutes sensitive and empathically attuned caregiving (Rothbaum et al., 2000). “Attention should be paid to the possibility that, although the biological function of attachment remains constant, attachment may become associated with other culturally derived needs at ages beyond infancy” (Crittenden, 1990, p. 272). For example, in some cultures, young children leave their families and homes to become brides, slaves, hunters, or soldiers, in which case they must adapt their attachment needs to meet cultural expectations.

Many social psychologists (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler, & Tipton, 1996; Grant, 1986, Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002; Pedersen, 2000; Stewart & Bennett, 1991; Sue & Sue, 2003; Triandis, 1995) describe the United States as a culture dominated by the ethos of individualism.

A preliminary definition of *individualism* is a social pattern that consists of loosely linked individuals who view themselves as independent of collectives; are primarily motivated by their own preferences, needs, rights, and the contracts they have established with others; give priority to their personal goals over the goals of others; and emphasize rational analysis of the advantages and disadvantages to associating with others. (Triandis, 1995, p. 2)

The works of Bellah et al. (1996), Grant (1986), Markus and Kitayama (1991), Oyserman et al. (2002), Pedersen (2000), Roland (1988), Stewart and Bennett (1991), Sue and Sue (2003) and Triandis (1995) explore the individualistic tradition found in America

and the Western world. They note that U.S. culture keenly emphasizes the compulsory quest of the individual to forge an identity independent from the family of origin and society and that the development of this identity often takes precedence over concern for the collective. Markus and Kitayama (1991) refer to the separateness popularly assumed to be inherent among private, independent selves in much of Western culture as the “independent construal of self” (p. 226). In non-Western cultures, they note, an “interdependent construal of self” (p. 226), in which the self is secondary to the larger social unit, serves as the dominant cultural trend.

From a cognitive perspective, independent selves tend to be sensitive and responsive to self-focused information, whereas interdependent selves are often attuned to information about significant others and collective activities (Fiske et al., 1998; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Shweder & Bourne, 1984; Triandis, 1989; Wang & Brockmeier, 2002). This selectivity in information processing and representation may result in differential memory content that focuses on either the self or the self in relation to others. (Wang, 2004, p. 5)

In every given culture, individual variation occurs across subpopulations in terms of whether an independent or an interdependent self-conceptualization is favored; however, for an independent self in an individualistic culture, the ideal configuration of selfhood consists of a fixed, differentiated identity most often derived from a private, central self. One’s social nexus serves as a secondary source of identity (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Roland (1988) makes this observation:

The individualized self . . . is the predominant inner psychological organization of Americans, enabling them to function in a highly mobile society where considerable autonomy is granted if not imposed. . . . The individualized self is characterized by inner representational organizations that emphasize: an individualistic “I-ness” with relatively self-contained outer ego-boundaries, sharp differentiation between inner images of self and other, and considerable social individuation. (p. 8)



This pervasive climate of individualism promotes in the West the valuing of highly specific personal traits and attributes that enable one to function optimally as a social agent—an agent generally detached from familial, political, religious, corporate, and class expectations that do not prove immediately self-relevant (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In general, qualities such as independence, autonomy, determination, self-reliance, assertiveness, creativity, and “having a competitive edge” (Bellah et al., 1996, p. 142) rank highly among desirable personal endowments.

We believe in the dignity, indeed the sacredness, of the individual. Anything that would violate our right to think for ourselves, judge for ourselves, make our own decisions, live our lives as we see fit, is not only morally wrong, it is sacrilegious. (Bellah et al., 1996, p. 142)

Triandis (1989, 1995) confirms that Westerners prefer modes of raising children that promote higher degrees of self-worth and self-actualization. “Child-rearing patterns in individualistic cultures tend to emphasize self-reliance, independence, finding yourself, and self-actualization” (Triandis, 1989). He claims that Western parents generally reject strict parental dominance, due to the fact that they perceive this as a position that will discourage the child’s sense of autonomy, a quality valued by Americans. Stewart and Bennett (1991) also put forward the observation that American parents consistently defer to the personal preference of the child in a manner often discouraged in other cultures. Harwood et al. (1995) found in their study that a within-group commonality found among “Anglo mothers from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds [was that they] appeared concerned with finding a balance between overly isolative autonomy and an overly enmeshed relatedness” (p. 83). A harmonious balance between self-reliance and the ability to relate with others arose as a primary concern for Anglo mothers in regard to

their children's attachment behaviors. The issue of self-confidence and the children's potential to "get ahead in life [and] make it on their own" (Harwood et al., 1995, p. 85) was also a common concern.

Wang's (2004) study shows distinct cultural differences in emerging self-constructs of young children in America and those in China, and she argues that early parent-child interactions provide the medium for the growth of the child's culture-specific view of self and others. In her cross-cultural comparative study, she reveals that children in the United States strongly emphasize emotional and psychological attributes in open-ended interviews requesting self-descriptions. These patterns contrasted with those of Chinese children, who focused primarily on daily routines:

The childhood memories of European American adults tend to be lengthy, detailed, and emotionally elaborate, focusing on the individual's own roles, predilections, and opinions. . . . European American preschoolers tend to provide more elaborate, more specific, and more self-focused autobiographical accounts than do Chinese preschoolers. (Wang, 2004, p. 5)

She concludes that the influence of culture is from even the earliest age embedded in the dynamic construction of the self. She contends that toddlers and children glean a cultural interpretive framework that shapes the organization of memory content, as well as personal and social self-constructs from nascent interactions with caregivers and other social agents.

Others have also observed that those with an independent self-construct tend to exhibit a high degree of emotional expressiveness. In a comparative study conducted by Matsumoto, Kudoh, Scherer, and Wallbott (1988) (as cited in Markus and Kitayama, 1991), American participants reported feeling their emotions for a greater length of time and more intensely than did Japanese participants, and they more often associated their

emotions with somatic symptoms. Both Wang (2004) and Markus and Kitayama (1991) observe that, for Americans, emotional expression forms the bedrock of one's self-concept, and the repression of one's feelings is frequently equated with inauthenticity.

People with independent selves will attend more to these feelings and act on the basis of them, because these feelings are regarded as diagnostic of the independent self. Not to attend to one's feelings is often viewed as being inauthentic or even denying the "real" self. (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 236)

Markus and Kitayama (1991) suggest that culturally differing organizations of self and other influence subjective experience even on the most basic levels of cognition, emotion, and motivation—psychological processes traditionally believed to transcend culture.

Harwood et al. (1995), Klohnen and Bera (1998), Roland (1988), and Welwood (2000) observe the relevance of community and extended family to the secure attachment bond. Klohnen and Bera state, "It is possible that environments such as larger families and smaller, more tight-knit communities contribute to secure attachments because they provide . . . opportunities for forging relatively immediate and safe attachment bonds with individuals other than their primary caregivers" (p. 220). Welwood observes that the vast majority of modern American children grow up geographically isolated from their extended families, and only one or two family members generally serve as the primary caregiver(s). He notes that one or two parents typically raise American children in socially isolated environments lacking in religious and/or cultural traditions. He suggests that this may heighten the overall impact internal working models exert on later functioning, inasmuch as additional attachment bonding opportunities may serve to diffuse the cognitive primacy of the parents. "In the American self, there is a remarkable

absence of community, tradition and shared meaning which impinge upon perception and give shape to behavior” (Stewart & Bennett, 1991, p. 130).

This research provides compelling evidence that both the dominant cultural system and the identified patterns of attachment co-determine the construction of self/other representations in a mutual process of exchange. Specifically, the interchange between the individualistic ideal that, by and large, comprises the core of American identity and the attachment configurations of internal working models that have been identified as operational in human development has been reviewed. In light of the data presented, it may be conjectured that “a culture-specific construct of the self in children, that is, of self-representations that integrate the framework of a child’s culture” (Wang, 2004, p. 3) emerges in close conjunction with self/other construals derived from early attachment experience.

#### *Memory, Culture, and Internal Working Models*

In the following section, implicit and explicit memory systems will be briefly outlined, and studies investigating the narrative construction of autobiographical memory will also be reviewed. Additionally, a theory of cognition that accounts for the reciprocal interchange between internal working models of attachment and sociocultural values will be presented. In the absence of easily accessible and economically practical measures evaluating implicit internal working models of attachment, the research delineated next will present an analysis of how the narrative methodology utilized in this study will reflect organizing themes derived from implicit internal working models. “Mental models can be seen within the ‘in-between-the-lines’ themes of the narratives that structure both our life stories and the manner in which we live our daily lives” (Siegal, 2003, p. 26). It is

important to bear in mind that, although two systems of memory will be presented as distinct processes, they are not generally considered entirely independent of one another. They often overlap.

Research in clinical, developmental, social, and personality psychology, as well as in the field of cognitive neuroscience, has, in recent years, begun to converge around the investigation of the content, structure, and organization of memory. Researchers currently recognize memory processes as functioning within two distinct systems: the implicit (non-declarative) and explicit (declarative) memory systems (Milner, Squire, & Kandel, 1998). Although it is the routine procedural and sensorimotor interactions that become encoded in the implicit memory system that primarily lay the groundwork for internal working models in infants, evidence suggests that, as the child reaches neurological maturation, information is integrated from both the implicit and explicit memory systems in the creation of autobiographical narratives.

Habituation, sensitization, learned skills, emotional responses, stimulus conditioning, and reflexive functioning exemplify implicit memory forms. Behavioral, perceptual, and somatic learning also represent implicit memory functions. Implicit memories include preconscious schemas based on repeated visual and sensory patterns of interaction. In addition to having emotional and behavioral components, “implicit memory has perceptual components such as seeing something early on in life and then having a sense of familiarity, but not the internal sensation of remembering” (Siegal, 2003, p. 25). Moreover, the retention and retrieval of implicit memories does not involve conscious intent (Siegal, 2003; Turk-Browne, Yi, & Chun, 2006).

Neural pathways operating in the fetal brain prior to birth mediate implicit memory and dominate much of early childhood experience in the first 3 years of life (Schoore, 2000a). Nonetheless, implicit memory functions are not limited to infancy. The vast majority of skilled behavior and affective responses result from the continual encoding of repetitious events in the implicit memory system across the life span.

Prior to the maturation of more advanced neural processing pathways, the infant relies heavily on the implicit memory system. Researchers understand it to play a key role in the formation and storage of mental models, sensorimotor schemas, and affective imprints in early childhood. Current neuropsychological studies (e.g., Schoore, 2000a) indicate that young children utilize the implicit memory system in the creation of internal working models in order to track and anticipate the proximity and whereabouts of caregivers as a method of survival.

Behavior shown by infants in the Strange Situation can be thought of as reflecting procedural knowledge. The consistency of such behavior suggests the nature of the underlying internal representational model. The representational model, then, should be considered a model based on procedural memory. (Crittenden, 1990, p. 262)

The explicit memory system requires cognitive representational faculties that undergo maturation in approximately the middle of the second year of life (Schoore, 2001a). “This critical period of orbitofrontal-driven maturation thus overlaps and mediates what Stern (1985) terms the developmental achievement of ‘the subjective sense of self’” (Schoore, 2001a, p. 35). The hippocampus plays an important role in the consolidation of memories that then become stored in the orbitofrontal cortex. Encoding occurs visually and linguistically, and the memories are readily accessed through deliberate recall (Crittenden, 1990). Learned facts, temporally specific personal

memories, and chronological narratives that may or may not undergo distortion during encoding comprise explicit memories (Crittenden, 1990).

Investigators distinguish between two types of explicit memory: generalized facts (semantic) and autobiographical narrative (episodic). “This latter form of [episodic] memory has the unique features of a sense of self and time” (Siegal, 2003, p. 74). Siegal (2003) notes that semantic memory pertains to the recollection of learned factual information not generally accompanied by the knowledge of when, where, and how the information was acquired. Episodic memory narratives, however, are context-bound, chronological recollections that possess sequentially and temporally specific information and include the memory of self as a participant. Brain imaging studies reveal that various regions in the orbitofrontal cortex, an area of the brain believed to be dependent on healthy attachment experience for optimal growth (Siegal, 2001, 2003), generate episodic (autobiographical) memory. Synaptic circuits in the orbitofrontal region reach maturity in the preschool years, and this may account for the emergence of autobiographical memory and sense of self during this time period (Siegal, 2003).

Implicit memories of infancy and very early childhood typically lack a verbal component, as they develop prior to language acquisition. Additionally, retrieval generally occurs without conscious effort, for implicit memory generally exists outside of conscious awareness (Squire, 1987). This poses a dilemma for those attempting to study the content of implicitly encoded early internal working models. Although the implicit memory system has been subject to intensive study over the last decade, easily accessible and economically practical implicit measures of attachment have not been developed to date (Hart, personal communication, 2006). Hence, this study deals primarily with

episodic (explicit) memory insofar as participants' autobiographical narratives will be subject to investigation.

Data suggest that early relational attachment exchanges become encoded “into implicit-procedural memory as enduring internal working models, which encode coping strategies of affect regulation (Schore, 1994)” (Schore, 2000a, p. 35). Some neuroimaging and behavioral testing measures reveal that implicit and explicit memory systems operate independently in differing regions of the brain (Tulving, 1985), but more recent investigations offer evidence that implicit and explicit memory may also share neural pathways during the various stages of information processing, encoding, and representation (Turk-Browne et al., 2006). Although the implicit memory system processes the vast majority of incoming information throughout infancy, as it is the only memory system operational at birth, Turk-Browne et al. present evidence that implicitly based memory pathways and explicit memory circuits exist as an interactive system. They suggest that “implicit retrieval may sometimes or always accompany explicit retrieval (Schott et al., 2005)” (Turk-Browne et al., 2006, p. 917). Their work supports Crittenden's (1990) suggestion that implicit imprints of early childhood experiences may structure, and become encoded in, explicit systems memory.

Given that both the implicit and explicit memory systems play a role in the creation of autobiographical narratives, individual differences in internal working models may be inferred through narrative accounts. Implicit internal working models affect the organization and content of autobiographical memory and self/other constructs (Conway, 2005) and may be identified through targeting affective-laden early relational recollections. “Biography as personal meaning system continues to shape experience long



after original events have occurred and social environments have ceased to exist because experiences and actions become internalized” (Noam, 1996, p. 12).

Bretherton (1995), Miller, Wiley, Fung, and Liang (1997), and Nelson (1993) examined the role of narratives shared between parent and child in the creation of memory, meaning, and self-concept. Nelson argues that autobiographical memory and the organization of knowledge are constructed socially in young children through child-parent narrative dialogue. She asserts that co-constructed narrative dialogue between mothers and young children regarding events as they occur appears to strengthen the long-term consolidation, storage, and organization of toddlers’ episodic memory. “Development of true autobiographical memory appears to be a function of social-cultural construction, especially of acquiring narrative forms for remembering” (Nelson, 1993, p. 21). The research of Miller et al. (1997) demonstrates that families from many cultural backgrounds utilize personal storytelling as an important socialization practice. Data reveal that storytelling in Chinese families served to convey common ethical and social practices to young children. For European American children, however, storytelling more often served as a form of entertainment and encouragement. Miller et al. also note that American children typically articulate autobiographical memories in conversation at a significantly younger age than children in Asian cultures. Bretherton’s findings (1995) suggest that parent-child dialogue serves to organize the content of the emergent explicit memory system and, in optimal attachment relationships, “induces the development of a well-organized system that can be intentionally accessed” (p. 257).

These investigations suggest that attachment, socialization, and culture play a significant role in autobiographical memory development, and that the implicit memory

system plays a crucial role in the inculcation of cultural values in infancy and early childhood. “Implicit learning is also a major mechanism for the incorporation of cultural learning, a process that initiates in infancy. Tucker (1992) asserts that social interactions promoting brain differentiation are the mechanism for teaching “epigenetic patterns of culture” (Schoore, 2001a, p. 43).

The work of Conway, Singer, and Tagini (2004) offers a conceptual framework of memory and self (referred to as the Self-Memory System) based on current neuroscience research whose findings exemplify the reciprocal influences of internalized subjective personal experience and cultural values on what they call “the working self” (p. 491). Conway et al. depict a system in which cultural and sociopsychological constructed schemas, inclusive of implicit internal working models, dynamically interact with the autobiographical (episodic) memory systems to procure a steady, coherent self-identity. Conway et al.’s research demonstrates how “complex interactions of internal working models with the conceptual self, autobiographical knowledge base, and episodic memory invoke self-defining memories” (p. 511) that yield a profound influence on the self.

As cited in Conway et al.’s (2004) research, Tagini, Conway, and Meins’ study explores the elaborate interchange arising between self-defining memories and Bowlby’s (1973) internal working models. They reveal that memories obtained from their research participants during the *Self-Defining Memory Task* (Singer & Moffitt, 1991-1992) reiterate participants’ assigned adult attachment status as determined by the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) (C. George et al., 1984, 1985, 1996). They report that a participant rated as *securely attached* during the AAI protocol provided equally lucid, integrated, and affectively diversified self-defining memories during the *Self-Defining*

*Memory Task*. As in participants' responses to the AAI, "the memories [offered during the *Self-Defining Memory Task*] were both highly specific and integrative (Blagov & Singer, 2004), reflecting the ability to merge affect and cognition in an optimal manner" (Conway et al., 2004, p. 514). Conversely, a participant rated as *preoccupied* offered memory narratives with negative content, spoke with confused rhetoric, and showed a high degree of affective activation. Furthermore, an individual classified as *dismissing* articulated vague and emotionless descriptions that lacked supporting detail. In other words, both the *Self-Defining Memory Task* and the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) (C. George et al., 1984, 1985, 1996) elicit corresponding internal working models of attachment because both tasks call for reflection upon autobiographical memories.

Conway et al. (2004) subsequently suggest that these memories reflect organizing themes derived from implicit internal working models that guide how new experiences are filtered, contextually processed, and interpreted so that the primary narrative underlying the self-defining memory remains unchallenged. They propose that this defense mechanism preserves the overall coherence and consistency of one's identity.

When examining the hypothesis brought forward by Engler (1986), Epstein (1995), Kornfield (1993), and Welwood (2000) that poor parenting serves as one variable contributing to difficulties Americans encounter when attempting to deepen with Zen Buddhist practice, in light of Conway et al.'s (2004) model, it may be seen how aspects of Buddhist practice may not only elicit but intensify internal working models of attachment. For example, in experientially touching upon the realization that the separate, personal self is a relative construction lacking a substantial, independent existence, practitioners' normative individualistic self-constructs are challenged. In triggering an individual's

unconscious effort to maintain a recognizable psychological self, this practice may produce the amplification of internal working models. Moreover, this may particularly apply to those with distressing relational memories serving as the basis of a weak self-image.

Also of significance to this study is the observation that American mothers engage in a high degree of co-narrative dialogue with their young children. This may account for the fact that Americans have the earliest and most emotionally complex memories, when compared in that respect with participants from other cultures. This indicates that an individualistic sociocultural environment may increase self-focus even in very young children and, consequently, result in the proliferation of affectively laden autobiographical memories, the content of which are presumed on the basis of attachment research findings, to be filtered and organized through implicit internal working models. This culturally inculcated propensity to recollect a higher quantity of early, vivid memories may also account for the psychological difficulties American Buddhists encounter in deepening with traditional Zen Buddhist practice.

Research reviewed suggests that a link exists between compromised early attachment relationships and later disturbances in self-image and interpersonal functioning, and in various forms of psychopathology. Additionally, data has been surveyed in this chapter illustrating that Asia and the Western world represent two diverse cultural traditions in which individuals “may hold strikingly divergent construals of the self, others, and the interdependence of the two” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 224). With this in mind, this researcher will review the observations of several prominent American Buddhist teachers, researchers, and clinicians in a presentation of some study

results that suggest that American Buddhists, partly as a result of poor parenting, encounter painful defensive patterns during various phases of meditation practice that, at times, distract from sustained intensive Zen Buddhist practice in its traditional form.

*The Tribulations of American Buddhist Practitioners*

The fertile dialogue occurring between Western psychology and Buddhism regarding the alleviation of human psychological suffering has been active in the United States for several decades. This dynamic exchange was first publicly articulated in 1960 with the milestone publication of *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, authored by Erich Fromm (1960), a psychoanalyst whose legacy still towers over the psychoanalytic field, Richard De Martino, and D. T. Suzuki Roshi, a Zen Master credited with the historically significant act of transplanting Zen Buddhism into the West (Metcalf, 2002). Indeed, it is largely through the vernacular of the Western psychological establishment that the dharma is being widely disseminated throughout the West. This may be seen in numerous popular publications, such as those of Brown (1986), Engler (1983, 1986, 2003), Epstein (1995), Kabat-Zinn (1994, 2005), Kornfield (1993, 2000), Walsh (1981, 1983), and Welwood (2000), as well as in the large number of American Buddhist teachers who are also mental health workers (Metcalf, 2002).

Some American Buddhist teachers have expressed the view that Westerners, due in part to the prevalence of familial dysfunction, contend with forms of mental affliction unique to this culture and that this partially accounts for the psychogenic conflict in American Buddhist populations arising during intensive meditative practice. “Although the fully enlightened are said to be free of all suffering, it is clear to me that even very advanced meditators are not free from certain kinds of pain that may well be unique to

Western contexts” (Klein, 1995, pp. 130-131). Among clinically trained American Buddhist teachers, Brown and Engler (1986), Engler (1983, 1986, 2001), Epstein (1995), Kornfield (1993, 2000), Walsh (1981, 1983) and Welwood (2000) have noted that, when engaged in intensive Buddhist practice, a significant percentage of American students regularly contend with emotional distress that their Asian counterparts reportedly seldom experience. For many, they observe, this prevents the strengthening of focused practice, and, for some, it generates deep shame and confusion that leads to the abandonment of practice altogether.

For reasons neither extensively researched in the West nor widely explored in ancient Buddhist texts, the Buddhist endeavor to ground the realization that the self does not possess an enduring, substantial, and independent existence proves particularly daunting for some American practitioners. The following accounts are provided to illustrate these observations:

We have seen how frequently students in the West encounter the deep wounds that result from the breakdown of the Western family system, the traumas of childhood. . . . At least half of the students at our annual three-month retreat find themselves unable to do traditional Insight Meditation because they encounter so much unresolved grief, fear, and wounding and unfinished developmental business from the past. (Kornfield, 1993, pp. 245-246)

For those, primarily Westerners, who begin with a history of estrangement, meditation will inevitably yield memories of early unmet longings that survive in the form of basic fault. . . . The low self-esteem that accompanies this longing, stemming from the sense that there is something deficient in the person who longs, often requires special attention of the psychotherapeutic kind. (Epstein, 1995, pp. 178-179)

Third, when basic development tasks are neglected or remain largely unfinished, Western students often find it difficult to deepen meditation beyond a certain point. . . . Whatever the origins of personal conflictual patterns, if they aren't consciously faced and healed, they will continue to repeat in practitioners and their communities. (Engler, 2003, pp. 46-47)

Reasons such as cultural conditioning (Engler, 2003; Welwood, 2000), alterations in the style of traditional Buddhist practice in American culture (such as the lack of emphasis on the cultivation of moral virtue), and the novel stresses of a modern industrial society, to name a few, may possibly account for this trend. Nonetheless, the focus of this work is intentionally limited to exploring how American Buddhists represent the meaning of their early attachment experiences at varying stages of meditative practice. That focus is herein maintained in an effort to investigate statements such as the following: “When we have not completed the basic developmental tasks of our emotional lives or are still quite unconscious in relation to our parents and families, we will find that we are unable to deepen in our spiritual practice” (Kornfield, 1993, p. 249).

Sufficient evidence shows that disruptions in attachment relationships may serve as “markers of a beginning pathological process, [and] risk factors for later pathology in the context of a complex model of interactive biological and environmental variables” (Carlson, 1998, p. 1108). Many attachment theorists (Ainsworth, 1967, 1985; Ainsworth & Bell, 1974; Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1973, 1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1988, C. George, Kaplan, & Main, 1984, 1985, 1996; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985) agree that early compromised attachment bonds pave the way for later psychological disturbances, and some American Buddhist teachers who also serve as trained mental health clinicians echo this sentiment. In an effort to further explore these statements, this investigation examines how American Buddhist practitioners (socially embedded in the individualistic culture dominant in the United States) describe childhood attachment experiences as they deepen with Zen meditation practice.

### *Conclusion*

Attachment theorists affirm that differences in individual attachment styles resulting from the overall quality of parent-infant contact play a significant role in shaping pivotal self/other constructs. Data suggest that these implicit behavioral patterns adopted in infancy and early childhood persist through internal working models purported to continually organize, filter, and process relationally relevant inter- and intrapersonal experience. Hence, attachment theorists presume that established internal working models guide behavior in a long-term, consistent, and predictable fashion.

In a separate field of inquiry, cultural and social psychologists have proposed that the American cultural tendency toward individualism impacts child-rearing practices (Stewart & Bennett, 1991; Triandis, 1989, 1995), the content and organization of autobiographical memory (Wang, 2004), the expression of affect (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Wang, 2004), and modern familial dynamics (Klohnen & Bera, 1998; Roland, 1988; Welwood, 2000). Individualism encourages the cultivation of specific personality traits and qualities (such as autonomy and self-reliance) and influences aspects of individual cognition, perception, and behavior (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, one's subjective attachment history and collective sociocultural values are viewed in this present work as mutually dependent factors influencing the dynamic construction of internal working models, and, consequently, self/other constructs.

Data also indicate that, for many Americans, the distinct, enduring sense of a discrete singular identity derives more from self-focused autobiographical memories, affective states, and attributes than from extended kinship bonds, religious beliefs, and/or cultural myths and narratives (Stewart & Bennett, 1991; Wang, 2004; Welwood, 2000).



Hence, internal working models encompassing “autobiographical knowledge from childhood, some episodic memories, [and] core conceptual beliefs about the self and significant others” (Conway et al., 2004, p. 512) may hold heightened psychological significance for Americans, as one’s personal identity tends in American culture to be independently constructed from subjective experience rather than defined within an interdependent network of interpersonal relationships (Roland, 1988).

For these reasons, this researcher hypothesizes that internal working models, particularly those based on insecure attachment styles, may become distressingly dominant for Americans engaged in traditional Buddhist practice, for the act of meditation invites a high degree of reflective introspection on normative self-conceptualizations. Buddhist practitioners also endeavor to embody the realization that the separate, personal self is a relative composite of interdependent aggregates, none of which possess an absolute, independent existence, which inherently threatens the coherence of one’s normative self-identity as developed within the pervasive American culture. Hence, this work uses a blended methodology to probe how American Zen Buddhists at varying stages of practice represent their early attachment experience.

### Chapter 3: Methods

This study utilized a combination of conventional methodologies and, thus, constituted a blended approach (Anderson & Braud, 1998). In the spirit of integral inquiry, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used. Nonequivalent groups design, a form of quasi-experimental design frequently utilized in social research (Mertens, 1998), was used to study the effect of Zen Buddhist meditation practice on American practitioners' attachment classifications when compared with those of Americans who did not have a meditation practice. The mode of qualitative inquiry utilized in this study was informed by narrative theory and, therefore, entailed a narratological research methodology (Hoshmand, 2005).

This researcher chose nonequivalent group design for the quantitative portion of this study because it is one of the most widely utilized quasi-experimental designs (Trochim, 2006). Quasi-experimental design was selected over classical experimental design because participants in this study were not randomly assigned to groups. Instead, self-selected participants recruited through advertisement were assigned to groups based on whether they were practicing Zen Buddhists or non-Buddhists. Attachment data for American Zen Buddhist subjects obtained from a self-report measure of attachment was statistically compared to data derived from those in a control group of Americans who did not have a meditation practice. Additionally, the percentage of secure versus insecure ratings for American Zen Buddhists was compared to "normative" American attachment patterns (70% *secure*, 20% *anxious-avoidant*, and 10% *anxious-resistant*) obtained by Ainsworth et al. (1978) in order to discern whether American Zen Buddhists were, typically, more or less conflicted with regard to attachment than was the average

population. Statistical analysis of variance (MANOVA) and non-parametric (chi-square) tests were used to compare groups.

A narratological methodology was chosen for the qualitative portion of this study for several reasons. The hypothesis of this present work assumes concurrence with the perspective of theorists who argue that the influence of early attachment-related experience cannot be divorced from the cultural context when examining the social underpinnings of self/other representation. Narrative theory focuses on meaning-making in narrative accounts of the self, as well as on the social and cultural context of narratives (Hoshmand, 2005). Due to the fact that narratological inquiry emphasizes a culturally informed perspective, the use of such a methodology intrinsically reconciles these generally independent branches of inquiry.

This investigation was concerned with how the most “transpersonal” facets of human existence are concurrently intimately personal and deeply rooted in the phenomenal world. “One of the central features of narrative knowing is that it ‘specializes in the forging of links between the exceptional and the ordinary’ (Bruner, 1990, p. 47)” (as cited in Murray, 2004, p. 97). Hence, narrative inquiry provided a suitable channel for examining the intersection of spiritual and personal facets of existence. Although it is widely acknowledged in the field of attachment that individuals continually update and expand cognitive models regarding attachment relationships over time, biographical research on internal working models is sorely lacking (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). Bretherton and Munholland (1999) make the following research suggestion:

A themata-based approach to the study of attachment histories might explore how individuals represent the meaning of their attachment and caregiving experiences across the life course, allowing us to understand more clearly how earlier selves

and patterns of relating are either incorporated into later selves/relationships or partially or wholly repudiated. (p. 107)

It was hoped that, in this researcher's use of methodology rarely employed in the investigation of attachment experience, a new perspective was brought to bear on the field of attachment research.

In this particular study, changes occurring over time to attachment style, as well as to self-defining memories, were tracked. This work specifically examined the autobiographical memory narratives of American Zen Buddhists in order to explore the meaning of significant personal attachment experiences for individuals committed to a religious tradition in which conceptual self-identity (generally understood by Western cognitive and social psychologists to be based largely on autobiographical and episodic memories) is ultimately viewed as a discontinuous moment-to-moment construction (Engler, 2003). A narrative analysis of American Zen Buddhists' self-defining memories may have helped to illuminate to what degree "Autobiographical memory is of fundamental significance for the self . . . for the experience of personhood . . . for the experience of enduring as an individual, in a culture, over time" (Conway & Pleydell-Pierce, 2000, p. 261).

Specifically, a categorical-content approach to narrative analysis was used in this present work to interpret, classify, and discuss results. "The categorical approach may be adopted when the researcher is primarily interested in a problem or a phenomenon shared by a group of people" (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998, p. 12). In this case, the shared phenomenon under examination was the effect of Zen Buddhist meditation practice on the self/other conceptualizations of Americans in relation to childhood

attachment experiences.

Although categorical-content narrative analysis was emphasized, holistic-form analysis was also utilized to explore deeper implicit meanings that could not necessarily be captured in purely structured analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998). Lieblich et al. suggest that the integration of content and form analysis is not only difficult to avoid in practice but also often offers an emotionally and symbolically enriched perspective when analyzing interview texts.

### *Participants*

Participants were limited to those born and raised in the United States, where individualism serves as the cornerstone of cultural identity. Although many Western European cultures may be classified as individualistic, Americans occupy a unique position in global society, as they are often, to a large degree, culturally isolated and express a high degree of individualism compared with other Western cultures (Williams, 2003). In this research, a high measure of cultural isolation was a key selection criterion, for this study aimed to examine how Americans, who are likely influenced by strong individualistic versus interdependent ideals even in early childhood, represent the meaning of early attachment experiences at varying stages of meditation practice.

In order to participate in the study, participants met the following criteria: They were 40 years of age or older; they were born and raised in the United States; they were not first-generation United States citizens; they had not lived outside of the United States in a non-European country for longer than 2 months; they did not identify as Native American (as this would have possibly been construed as including a participant with an indigenous versus individualistic worldview); and they identified either as having been

practicing Zen Buddhism for at least 1 year, or, for the control group, having never had a meditation practice of any type.

For Zen Buddhists, it was required for participation in the study that they had sustained a consistent daily meditation practice for at least 1 year and that they had attended at least one meditation retreat lasting a minimum of 5 days. An effort was made to avoid inclusion of individuals who had been diagnosed with serious mental illness and/or substance abuse issues, or who had trained as mental health professionals, as such training would have likely included knowledge of attachment theory that could have potentially cause biased response patterns on the questionnaire.

For this study, a total of 80 participants was recruited. Forty of these participants were practicing Zen Buddhists, and they were recruited from various Zen Buddhist communities throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. An equal number of men and women with a varying number of years of sustained Zen Buddhist meditation practice (ranging from 1 to 15+ years) participated. The remaining 40 participants served as the control group, and this group was comprised of Americans recruited from the general population who did not engage in any type of meditation practice. Middle-aged participants (40 years and older) were selected in order to minimize the effect of participant maturation on this study's results.

### *Instruments*

The initial demographic questionnaire was prefaced by a short introduction and asked the participant to respond to a number of general, and then more specific, demographic questions. It was completed during a 10-minute telephone interview. Respondents' answers to these questions served as inclusion/exclusion criteria. If

participants met the inclusion criteria, they were then asked to take an online survey. They were also informed that they might be selected to participate in a 1-hour interview, at which point they would be given two additional surveys.

Qualifying participants were asked to logon to a confidential Web site to complete a closed-format questionnaire: the *Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Adult Attachment Questionnaire (ECR-R)*. This questionnaire was revised by Fraley, Brennan, and Waller (2000) and is based on the Brennan, Clark, and Shaver's (1998) *Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire*. Although the *Adult Attachment Interview (C. George et al., 1984)* is perhaps the most popular and widely used interview-based measure of adult attachment, learning to administer and score this assessment properly involves a costly, in-depth training procedure that is not an economically practical option for consumers completing a graduate-level education in psychology. Furthermore, Shaver, Belsky, and Brennan (2000) report concerning their study that "quantitative coding scales from the AAI were all significantly related to self-report romantic attachment measures" (p. 25), indicating that attachment classifications determined through self-report attachment measures may be comparable to attachment classifications measured with the AAI protocol.

The *ECR-R* was designed to assess adult attachment style. Specifically, it is a 36-item self-report attachment measure with items on a Likert scale rated 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Test items are presented to respondents in randomized order, and responses on two 18-item subscales yield separate scores: Avoidance and Anxiety. The Anxiety subscale measures individual differences in the degree to which an individual feels anxiety with regard to the responsiveness and availability (attachment-

related anxiety) of a romantic partner. The Avoidance subscale measures the extent to which an individual feels able to rely on and share openly with a romantic partner (attachment-related avoidance) (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000).

The *Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Adult Attachment Questionnaire (ECR-R)* offers a two-dimensional model of attachment-related anxiety and avoidance based on the four-group model of adult attachment proposed by Bartholomew (1990) and Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991). “According to Fraley and Shaver (2000), attachment-related anxiety reflects an individual’s predisposition toward ‘anxiety and vigilance concerning rejection and abandonment,’ whereas, the avoidance dimension ‘corresponds to discomfort with closeness and dependency or a reluctance to be intimate with others’ (pp. 142-143)” (Sibley, Fischer, & Liu, 2005, p. 1524). Fraley et al. (2000) suggest that attachment security is measured most accurately in the context of dimensional models and multi-item inventories, rather than in typological models.

The authors conclude, as did Bartholomew and Shaver (1998) and Fraley and Waller (1998), that attachment measures are more precise when analyzed in terms of dimensions rather than types, and that different measures of attachment are related at the level of underlying dimensions, despite differences in focus (child-parent vs. romantic/marital attachments), content (discourse and defensiveness vs. experiences in romantic relationships), and method variance (interview coding, social desirability biases, etc.). (Shaver et al., 2000, p. 25)

Scores on the two dimensions measured with this instrument, those of anxiety and avoidance, are combined and plotted in one of four quadrants: (a) secure (low attachment-related anxiety and avoidance), (b) preoccupied (low attachment-related avoidance and high attachment-related anxiety), (c) dismissing (low attachment-related anxiety and high attachment-related avoidance), and (d) fearful-avoidant (high attachment-related anxiety and avoidance). Hence, in this model, the classification of *disorganized* as proposed by



Main et al. (1985) is replaced by Bartholomew's (1990) classification of *fearful-avoidant*.

Items on the *ECR-R* were taken from the same item pool as were those from the original *Experiences in Close Relationships* (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) scale, and were selected using item response theory (IRT) analysis. "Fraley et al. (2000) analyzed these items using an innovative combination of classical psychometric techniques, such as factor analysis, and item responses theory (IRT) analysis" (Sibley et al., 2005, p. 1525). This combination of items fostered a scale that provides "substantially more precise estimates" (Sibley et al., 2005, p. 1525) of attachment styles across a trait range. Over a 6-week period, test-retest correlations were found to be in the low .90s (Sibley & Liu, 2004). Fraley et al. estimate the internal consistency reliability to be .90 or higher. In a 3-part study, Sibley et al. (2005) documented the short-term temporal stability, factor structure, and convergent and discriminate validity of the *ECR-R* and found that "the *ECR-R* provides one of, if not, the most appropriate self-report measure of adult attachment currently available" (p. 1534).

Eight participants from the group of 40 Zen Buddhists and 8 participants from the control group of 40 non-meditators were then selected based on *ECR-R* scores (highest and lowest scoring participants in each group) to participate in either an in-person or a telephone interview, depending on location. These 16 participants were asked to provide memory narratives from early childhood involving themselves and chief caregivers in a modified *Self-Defining Memory Questionnaire* (Singer & Moffitt, 1991-1992). Participants' unique, subjective attachment histories and cultural and sociopsychological meaning-making processes were surmised through narrative analysis. Comparative changes in the manner in which participants presented or interpreted autobiographically

based narrative were also explored by examining the content of questionnaire responses through narratological analysis. Finally, both Buddhist and non-meditating participants were given a *Researcher-Developed Questionnaire* composed of four, open-ended questions, the responses to which were subjected to narrative analysis.

The paper-based *Self-Defining Memory Questionnaire* is a standardized qualitative instrument that describes specific features of a self-defining memory and then requests that participants provide for the interviewer three self-defining memories in response to three open-ended, essay-style questions. The questionnaire-based interview takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. The *Self-Defining Memory Questionnaire* qualifies as an episodic interview seeking detailed narrative accounts that “provide a coherent casual account of an event that has occurred. . . . [and] a certain shape, structure, or plot to a sequence of events” (Murray, 2004, p. 98).

The study conducted by Singer and Moffitt (1991-1992) requested that memories be written by participants on paper. In this present study, however, participants were asked to respond to questions verbally, and their accounts were tape recorded. Additionally, participants in the present study were asked to provide memories from childhood that involved them and one or more caregivers rather than to select any self-defining memories, as had been requested in the Singer and Moffitt (1991-1992) questionnaire. They were asked, based on Singer and Moffitt’s (1991-1992) suggestion for such data gathering, to give each memory a title and report their age at the time it occurred, and to describe where they were at the time it occurred, whom they were with, what happened, their response, and the response of others with them at the time, and how they were feeling in the present when recalling the memory.

The *Self-Defining Memory Questionnaire* was devised by Singer and Moffitt (1991-1992) in an effort to investigate the content and organization of autobiographical memories in order to examine individual differences in personality and develop a more expansive model of the interaction between personality and cognition (Singer & Moffitt, 1991-1992). Singer and Salovey (1993) explain that “Through the study of what we call self-defining memories, we propose that individual differences in interpersonal relationships, pursuit of long-term goals, and characteristic affective reactions may be elucidated” (p. 9). Singer and Salovey attribute five defining qualities to self-defining memories: affective intensity, vividness, repetitiveness, linkage to other memories, and focus on enduring concerns or unresolved conflicts. Since its development, the *Self-Defining Memory Questionnaire* has been used primarily in the personality research endeavors of Singer (1998, 2004, 2005, 2006), Blagov and Singer (2004), Singer and Blagov (2004), Singer and Salovey (1993, 1996), Moffitt and Singer (1994), McLean and Thorne (2003), Singer and Moffitt (1991-1992), Thorne and McLean (2002, 2003), and Thorne, McLean, and Lawrence (2004). Thorne (personal communication, 2007) says the following about a narrative methodology lacking a standard coding system:

Any systematic coding system that is reliable across coders, and that relates meaningfully to other phenomena, is sufficient to demonstrate its usefulness. In other words, it is not a survey, but an open-ended questionnaire, so its standards of viability are different.

This questionnaire was selected for this present study because it is specifically designed to assess emotionally charged memories that have come enduringly to represent a major organizing factor in the crystallization of personal identity.

After completing the *Self-Defining Memory Questionnaire*, Zen Buddhist participants were asked to share a qualitative *Researcher-Developed Questionnaire* any emotional challenges, blocks, or difficulties they had encountered throughout the course of their meditation practice on. Non-meditators were asked to describe any transformative experiences they felt had brought about a radical shift in how they related to others and why they thought this shift had occurred. All participants were also asked how they believed the attachment-related memories shared during the *Self-Defining Memory Questionnaire* impacted their relational experiences in the present. All questions asked on the *Researcher-Developed Questionnaire* were open-ended questions designed to elicit participants' short- and long-term experience of attachment and any emotional or psychological difficulties or transformations they have had in regard to attachment. The purpose of this inquiry was to gain a more in-depth understanding of participants' particular attachment styles and to discern what unknown factors, aside from Zen Buddhist practice, influenced participants' attachment styles. This questionnaire took 30 minutes to 1 hour to complete.

#### *Procedure*

*Selection.* Participants for this study were recruited through an advertising flyer that was sent via e-mail to all members of the Pacific Zen Institute, the Open Source Project, and other Zen Buddhist communities. Paper flyers were also displayed at zendos where Zen Buddhists communities regularly gathered throughout the greater San Francisco Bay Area. In order to recruit members for the control group, advertising flyers were sent via e-mail when possible, and paper flyers were displayed at local schools, work places, and business establishments. Flyers were also posted on the "Volunteer"

section of Craig's List, an online local community forum. These methods of recruitment were intended to attract participants of various ages with varying years of practice and diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, sexual orientations, family histories, and occupations. Those interested in participating were asked to contact the experimenter directly through the contact information I provided on the advertisement. At that point, they then received a copy of the informed consent form via email.

*Informed consent.* Prior to providing demographic information, potential participants were provided with documentation that presented the following: (a) a general outline of the study's purpose, (b) the instruments used and procedures involved, (c) the minimum and maximum time commitment required, (d) the potential risks and benefits, (e) information as to how their final scores and transcribed interviews (if applicable) might be obtained, (f) their right to withdraw at any time, (g) the experimenter's contact information, and (h) a statement regarding the manner in which human participants' consideration of confidentiality and anonymity would be strictly maintained throughout the entire process. On agreeing to take part in the study, each participant was provided with a copy of the signed informed consent for his or her records. One standard informed consent letter was given to each member of the total sample population.

*Survey.* After participants had completed the process of signing and returning a copy of the informed consent letter, they completed a demographic information interview by telephone, in order to determine eligibility. If they qualified for participation, I asked subjects to complete an online *ECR-R* survey and informed them they might also be asked to participate in a follow-up interview. For those who qualified for, and were eligible and willing to participate in a 1-hour interview, I set up a convenient appointment time. All

participants completed the *Self-Defining Memory Questionnaire* and the *Researcher-Developed Questionnaire* during a telephone interview with the researcher. At the onset of the interview, I offered a brief description of myself and the purpose of the interview, and I again explained to participants the confidential nature of the process. S/he were then provided with a copy of the *Self-Defining Memory Questionnaire* that described what a self-defining memory is and presented instructions that I reviewed aloud as to how to provide three self-defining memories. Prior to the meeting, participants were alerted to the fact that their self-defining memories and answers to the *Researcher-Developed Questionnaire* would be tape-recorded and transcribed. Gathering demographic information took no more than 10 minutes. The completion of the online *Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Adult Attachment Questionnaire* took no more than 10 minutes. The completion of the *Self-Defining Memory Questionnaire* and *Researcher-Developed Questionnaire* took no more than 1 hour total.

*Treatment of data.* The demographic characteristics for each participant were compiled and analyzed for presentation in the final study, with the most relevant topics of interest being current relationship status, major attachment-related circumstances occurring in childhood, adult attachment status, and total number of years of Zen Buddhist practice, because such considerations impacted the final results. Survey data was collected through personal contact for a period of approximately 6 months. The researcher had initially intended to score the *Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Adult Attachment Questionnaire (ECR-R)* online at <http://www.yourpersonality.net>, a Web site developed by Dr. R. Chris Fraley, the creator of *ECR-R*. At this site, Anxiety and Avoidance scores are automatically calculated after responses are entered and are

plotted into a two-dimensional graph defined by attachment-related anxiety and avoidance that shows respondents' attachment classifications. I later discovered, however, that the version of the *ECR-R* located at <http://www.yourpersonality.net> represents a modified version of the original *ECR-R* in which 16 items are taken from the original instrument, and the remaining 20 items are selected at random from a bank of over 300 items (Fraley, 2005). Hence, I reproduced the *ECR-R* survey with the original 36 items presented in randomized order at <http://www.surveymonkey.com>. Participants were provided with a link to this site and a pseudonym that they were prompted to enter before beginning the survey. All response data were encrypted. After all survey results were collected, I scored each *ECR-R* measure by hand.

At this point, it became relevant to know the cut-off scores that distinguished between high and low levels of anxiety and avoidance. Five attempts using different communication channels were made to contact Dr. Fraley to obtain this information. Dr. Fraley, however, did not respond to these inquiries. Therefore, given that the lowest possible score on the Anxiety and Avoidance subscales is 18, and the highest possible score on the Anxiety and Avoidance subscales is 126, the researcher determined the cut-off score for both to be the midpoint: 72. Attachment classifications were then determined by plotting results into an XY scatterplot representing a two-dimensional model of attachment-related anxiety and avoidance comparable to the one found at <http://www.yourpersonality.net>. This yielded one of four attachment classifications: (a) secure, (b) preoccupied, (c) dismissing, and (d) fearful-avoidant.

After determining the attachment style of each participant, the researcher used statistical analysis of variance (MANOVA) to determine if there was a significant

relationship between years of meditation and Anxiety scores, Avoidance scores, or the average score on both attachment dimensions. Additionally, a significant relationship between religious affiliation and Anxiety scores, Avoidance scores, or the average score on both attachment dimensions, was sought. Zen Buddhist and non-Buddhist attachment styles and American attachment norms as defined by Ainsworth et al. (1978) were also compared using a chi-square goodness-of-fit test. A chi-square test was used as well in order to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the attachment styles of Buddhists and non-Buddhists.

From the 80 total participants, 16 were selected to participate in an interview. Initially, it was intended for the qualitative portion of the study that Zen Buddhist participants would be divided into four stratified groups based on years of meditation practice, and that 2 members from each of the four groups, for a total of 8, were to be selected: 1 who received the highest scores on the *ERC-R* Anxiety and Avoidance subscales, and 1 who received the lowest scores on the *ECR-R* Anxiety and Avoidance subscales. Statistical analysis (MANOVA), however, showed that number of years of meditation practice had no influence on *ECR-R* scores for Buddhist participants when compared with non-meditators in that respect. Therefore, for both Buddhist and non-Buddhist participants, the 4 participants with the highest scores on the Anxiety and Avoidance subscales and the 4 participants with the lowest scores on the Anxiety and Avoidance subscales, for a total of 8 from each group, were selected to participate in an interview. An attempt was made to match participants from both groups according to age, gender, and scores.



Interviews based on the *Self-Defining Memory Questionnaire* and the *Researcher-Developed Questionnaire* were subjected to narrative analysis that considered both the interpersonal and social context of self-defining memories.

The interview data was analyzed using two different approaches to narrative analysis. First, categorical-content analysis based on the work of Sanderson and McKeough (2005) was used to determine the types of significant childhood events and parent/child responses to these events presented by individuals classified as secure and insecure as determined by the *ECR-R*. Second, holistic-form analysis was used to examine the types of interpretive frameworks used by Zen Buddhists and non-Buddhists when describing childhood events. This method was also used to determine whether religious experiences influenced these frameworks. Finally, categorical-content analysis based on the work of McAdams, Hoffman, Mansfield, and Day (1996) and on McAdams (2001) was used to identify themes of agency and communion, as defined by Bakan (1966), in the accounts of Zen Buddhist and non-Buddhist participants. The frequency with which participants in each group articulated these themes was then measured and compared to evaluate whether there were differences between groups in terms of focus on self-interested pursuits versus communal interaction. All data was kept at all times in a secure location. The names of the participants were in no manner revealed at any time during the research process or in the final dissertation.

*Predictions.* The main goal of this study was to determine how Zen Buddhist meditation practice affects American practitioners' attachment styles and autobiographical narratives of early attachment experiences with caregivers when compared with those evidenced in the narratives of American non-Buddhists. This

researcher postulated that Zen Buddhist meditation practice transforms conflicted attachment patterns over time, and it was expected that Zen Buddhists with more advanced practice would receive an attachment classification of secure on the *ECR-R* more often than would non-meditators. This researcher also postulated that, when compared with norms for Americans reported by Ainsworth et al. (1978), American Zen Buddhists with the least number of years of practice would receive an attachment classification of insecure more often than those in the general population, as this researcher postulated that many who seek out religious practices initially do so to compensate for an otherwise absent sense of security and to regulate emotional distress (Granqvist, 1998).

This researcher also postulated that Buddhist practitioners would have greater awareness of internal working models of attachment and would consequently be less subject to acting out unconscious patterns when relating to others. This researcher postulated that those committed to Zen Buddhist practice for the most number of years would place less emotional valence on early childhood experiences, inasmuch as they would provide accounts of childhood attachment experiences with a neutral emotional tone, decreased self-focus, and evidence of higher resolution of conflict. Additionally, this researcher postulated that Buddhist practitioners would offer accounts showing increased concern with interrelatedness versus individualistic ideals when compared with the accounts of non-meditators.

#### *Limitations and Delimitations*

*Limitations.* Quasi-experimental design is particularly susceptible to threats of internal validity, given that the assignment to groups is non-random (Trochim, 2006).

“Any prior differences between groups may affect the outcome of the study. Under the worst circumstances, this can lead us to conclude that our program didn’t make a difference when in fact it did, or that it made a difference when in fact it didn’t” (Trochim, 2006, para. 2). In order to compensate for the threat of selection bias, participants in each group within this study were matched as closely as possible in terms of age, gender, and demographic history; however, some prior group differences, such as temperament, biological predisposition, or resilience, could not be accounted for. In terms of selection-history threat, those with a Zen Buddhist practice were chosen in order to minimize the possibility that different forms of Buddhist practice, such as Dzogchen or Vipassana, may have had a different impact on attachment styles. This delimitation of the one group to Zen practitioners also served to minimize the threat posed by selection-instrumentation, although there are variations among the varieties of Zen Buddhist practice, depending on the lineage from which the individual practitioner’s tradition arises, that cannot be entirely accounted for. The threat of selection-maturation was controlled by selecting participants who were middle-aged and older. In terms of selection-regression, Zen Buddhists may be attracted to Buddhist practice because they are seeking to compensate for, or find relief from, the various psychological consequences of an already disorganized or insecure attachment style (Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1994, 1995)—a threat by which the findings in this study were limited.

In narrative analysis, the researcher selects what is considered to be relevant, worthy, and important information about a subjective personal experience. Additionally, evidence suggests (Conway et al., 2004; Main, 1995; Herman, 1992) that individuals classified with an insecure attachment status, as well as those who have suffered

significant trauma, may have difficulty providing coherent extended narrative accounts, and this was considered in the final data analysis. Secondly, “Studies in memory organization have not directly investigated the effect of writing down one’s memory compared to speaking one’s memory aloud” (Singer & Moffitt, 1991-1992; personal communication, Thorne, 2007). Hence, a spoken narration may have produced different recollections than would have written summaries. Thirdly, McLean and Thorne (2003) note that, “The concept of self-defining memories may also seem less compelling in cultures that do not emphasize personal event telling, such as Mayan and Japanese communities (Minami & McCabe, 1991; Rogoff & Mistry, 1990)” (p. 181). This is also expressed in the research of Wang (2004), previously reviewed in this work, who observes that the narratives of American children are far more self-focused than are those of Chinese children. Hence, it may be true, for American Zen Buddhists who have experienced the self as a moment-by-moment construction, that the role of self-defining memories in the creation of personal identity was less meaningful (Thorne & McLean, 2003). Additionally, Fraley, Waller, and Brennan (2000) note that on the secure versus insecure end of the *ECR-R* dimensions, reliability may decline slightly; however, the *ECR-R* remains the best self-report measure of adult romantic attachment currently available. Lastly, subjects wishing to participate in this study self-selected that opportunity, and this may have biased the sample population.

In order to minimize any inherent researcher bias that I may have held as a practicing psychological intern (working with children with attachment issues), I performed a short meditation before conducting interviews and analyzing data. The purpose of this was to help me observe when my personal opinions, experiences, or

beliefs might have been preventing me from looking and listening without preconceived notions.

*Delimitations.* One delimitation was the choice to narrow the focus of this research project to American Zen Buddhists. Ideally, a cross-cultural sample of Buddhist practitioners may have provided a more globally comprehensive view of the trials and tribulations commonly encountered by Buddhist practitioners. However, this study was localized to the culture of the United States and the style of Zen Buddhism currently adapted to and practiced in America. It must also be taken into account that the form of Zen Buddhism popular in the United States has evolved since first being introduced several decades ago and, in certain regards, no longer resembles traditional Japanese Zen practice. Additionally, individuals needed to be available to communicate by phone or e-mail in order to participate in this study and could not be observing prolonged silence, which is, at times, an aspect of practice.

### *Conclusion*

This study examined how American Buddhists at varying stages of practice represented the meaning of their early attachment experiences with caregivers. As an individual who has maintained a Buddhist meditation practice for over 10 years and who has worked in therapeutic settings with families and children for several years, this topic is personally significant for me. Due to the fact that we inhabit a culture that strongly emphasizes the central importance of the private, self-reliant individual and whose mental health practitioners routinely emphasize the role of parenting in the etiology of adult psychopathology, I developed an intense curiosity as to how Americans reconcile Zen Buddhist practice with past personal subjective experiences. I have often pondered key

differences, as well as important points of contact, between the contemporary Western mental health system, an establishment that focuses almost entirely on self-exploration, and Zen Buddhism, a religion that espouses a doctrine of no-self, as both are despite that basic difference concerned with the alleviation of suffering.

Self-defining memories are storied self-accounts viewed by cognitive researchers as essential units of the autobiographical knowledge base that reveal “affective patterns and themes that stamp an individual’s most important concerns” (Singer & Salovey, 1993, p. 4). Social constructivists commonly presume that self-defining memories are vital to the narrative construction of identity and to the internalized life story as occurring in the broader socio-cultural context. Conway et al. (2004) suggest that self-defining memories exemplify dominant themes and beliefs about the self, others, and the environment extracted from “complex interactions of internal working models across the conceptual self, autobiographical knowledge base, and episodic memory” (p. 511). They propose that these memories become particularly active during periods in which the internalized life story is challenged. Buddhism presents the ontological self as a constructed entity that lacks enduring qualities or characteristics and, thus, directly challenges normative conceptualizations of personal identity. For reasons not extensively researched, this premise allegedly proves challenging for some American Buddhists to embody. “For those, primarily Westerners, who begin with a history of estrangement, meditation will inevitably yield memories of early unmet longings that survive in the form of basic fault” (Epstein, 1995, pp. 178-179).

In this study, the researcher sought dominant themes, patterns, and beliefs encompassed in internal working models of relationships regarding the self and others

and their overall relationship to one's sense of personal identity at varying stages of American Zen Buddhist practice. The researcher also examined enduring personal memories of attachment-related experiences, unique to the individual's history and simultaneously situated in a broader cultural context, to determine to what degree such memories remain centrally organizing principles in psychologically constructed self-identity after prolonged Zen Buddhist practice.

## Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter, the findings of this study are presented in several sections. The chapter begins with a section providing relevant demographic information for those who participated in the study. The second section provides descriptive statistics on major attachment-related circumstances occurring in childhood for all participants. Data collected from the *Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Adult Attachment Questionnaire (ECR-R)* is presented in the third section. The fourth section reviews the results of chi-square and MANOVA analyses of relevant data. The final section presents results from narrative analysis of data collected from the *Self-Defining Memory Questionnaire* and the *Researcher-Developed Questionnaire*.

### *Demographic Profile of Sample*

Of 80 total participants recruited for this study, 40 were Zen Buddhists, and 40 were non-Buddhists. Most Zen Buddhists (29, 72.5%) belonged to the Pacific Zen Institute in California. A few, however, were recruited from the Open Source Project (4, 10%), Rocks and Clouds Zendo (5, 12.5%), Kannon Do Zendo (1, 2.5%) and San Francisco Zen Center (1, 2.5%). The number of years of daily meditation practice ranged from 1.5-35 ( $M = 15.76$ ). The most significant proportion of participants (9, 22.5%) fell into the range of 10-14 years of practice, followed by 8 (20%) who had 20-24 years of practice. Six (15%) had been practicing 5-9 years, and 5 (12.5%) had been practicing 1-4 years. Results of the demographic questionnaire are shown in Table 1.



Table 1

*Years Meditation Practice for Zen Buddhist Participants*

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| Years | <i>N</i> | %     | Range  | <i>M</i> |
|-------|----------|-------|--------|----------|
| 1-4   | 5        | 12.5  |        |          |
| 5-9   | 6        | 15.0  |        |          |
| 10-14 | 9        | 22.5  |        |          |
| 15-19 | 4        | 10.0  |        |          |
| 20-24 | 8        | 20.0  |        |          |
| 25-29 | 3        | 7.5   |        |          |
| 30-34 | 4        | 10.0  |        |          |
| 35-39 | 1        | 2.5   |        |          |
| Total | 40       | 100.0 | 1.5-35 | 15.76    |

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In Table 2, the religious affiliation of non-Buddhists is shown. Of 40 non-Buddhists, the majority were Christian (16, 40%) and active members of their church. Another 7 (17.5%) participants identified as Christian but did not engage in any form of religious practice, for a total of 23 (57.5%) Christians. Ten (25%) participants had no religious affiliation. Three (7.5%) were involved in Animism/Shamanic practice. Two identified as Jewish but did not engage in any formal religious practice, and 2 (5%) were Agnostic.

Table 2

*Religious Affiliation of Non-Buddhist Participants*

| Religious affiliation     | <i>N</i> | %     |
|---------------------------|----------|-------|
| Christian                 | 16       | 40.0  |
| Christian—non-active      | 7        | 17.5  |
| None                      | 10       | 25.0  |
| Animism/shamanic practice | 3        | 7.5   |
| Agnostic                  | 2        | 5.0   |
| Jewish—non-active         | 2        | 5.0   |
| Total                     | 40       | 100.0 |

Of 80 total participants (40 Zen Buddhists, 40 non-Buddhists), there were 27 men (21 Zen Buddhists, 6 non-Buddhists) and 53 women (19 Zen Buddhists, 34 non-Buddhist) participants, as shown in Table 3. All participants were Caucasian. There were six times as many women as men participants among non-Buddhists, whereas the ratio between Zen Buddhist men and women was approximately equal. Whereas Zen Buddhists, many of whom were acquaintances of the researcher, were recruited through fliers distributed primarily among California-based Zen Buddhist communities, non-Buddhists were generally recruited through fliers forwarded via e-mail by the researcher's family in Tennessee and ads placed on Craig's List. This may account for some of the imbalance between men and women participants in the non-Buddhist sample.

In order to control the threat of selection-maturation, participants who were of middle-age and older (40+ years) were selected for this study. The age range of all

participants, also shown in Table 3, was 40 to 80 years, with a mean age of 54.9 years. The most significant proportion of men fell into the 40-49 (10, 12.5%) age range. The most significant proportion of women fell into the 50-59 (21, 26.25%) age range. For Zen Buddhists, the most significant proportion of men (8, 20%) and women (10, 25%) fell into the 50-59 age range. The mean age was 56.5 years. For non-Buddhists, the most significant proportion of men (4, 10%) and women (4, 10%) fell into the 40-49 age range. The mean age was 53.4 years. Between Zen Buddhists and non-Buddhists, there was a difference of 3.1 years between mean ages. The majority of Zen Buddhist participants fell into an older age range when compared with the age range of non-Buddhists; however, most Buddhist participants were members of the Pacific Zen Institute, a community whose members tend to represent an older population.

Table 3

*Demographic Profile of Sample by Sex and Age Range*

| Age by<br>years | Zen Buddhist <i>N</i> = 40 |      |          |      | Non-Buddhist <i>N</i> = 40 |      |          |      | All participants <i>N</i> = 80 |       |          |       |
|-----------------|----------------------------|------|----------|------|----------------------------|------|----------|------|--------------------------------|-------|----------|-------|
|                 | Men                        |      | Women    |      | Men                        |      | Women    |      | Men                            |       | Women    |       |
|                 | <i>N</i>                   | %    | <i>N</i> | %    | <i>N</i>                   | %    | <i>N</i> | %    | <i>N</i>                       | %     | <i>N</i> | %     |
| 40-49           | 6                          | 15.0 | 3        | 7.5  | 4                          | 10.0 | 13       | 32.5 | 10                             | 12.50 | 16       | 20.00 |
| 50-59           | 8                          | 20.0 | 10       | 25.0 | 1                          | 2.5  | 11       | 27.5 | 9                              | 11.25 | 21       | 26.25 |
| 60-69           | 5                          | 12.5 | 5        | 12.5 | 1                          | 2.5  | 9        | 22.5 | 6                              | 7.50  | 14       | 17.5  |
| 70-79           | 1                          | 2.5  | 1        | 2.5  | 0                          |      | 1        | 2.5  | 1                              | 1.25  | 2        | 2.5   |
| 80-89           | 1                          | 2.5  | 0        |      | 0                          |      | 0        |      | 1                              | 1.25  | 0        |       |
| Total           | 21                         | 52.5 | 19       | 47.5 | 6                          | 15.0 | 34       | 80.0 | 27                             | 33.75 | 53       | 66.25 |

Table 4 shows the demographic profile by sex and sexual orientation. Among the 80 total participants, those who were heterosexual (74, 92.5%), bisexual (3, 3.8%), and queer (3, 3.8%) were represented. Their distribution across both religious groups was approximately the same.

Table 4

*Demographic Profile of Sample by Sex and Sexual Orientation*

| Sex<br>orient | Zen Buddhist <i>N</i> = 40 |      | Non-Buddhist <i>N</i> = 40 |      | All participants <i>N</i> = 80 |      |          |      |          |       |          |       |
|---------------|----------------------------|------|----------------------------|------|--------------------------------|------|----------|------|----------|-------|----------|-------|
|               | Men                        |      | Women                      |      | Men                            |      | Women    |      | Men      |       | Women    |       |
|               | <i>N</i>                   | %    | <i>N</i>                   | %    | <i>N</i>                       | %    | <i>N</i> | %    | <i>N</i> | %     | <i>N</i> | %     |
| Hetero        | 20                         | 50.0 | 16                         | 40.0 | 5                              | 12.5 | 33       | 82.5 | 25       | 31.25 | 49       | 61.25 |
| Queer         | 1                          | 2.5  | 1                          | 2.5  | 1                              | 2.5  | 0        |      | 2        | 2.50  | 1        | 1.25  |
| Bi            | 0                          |      | 2                          | 5.0  | 0                              |      | 1        | 2.5  | 0        |       | 3        | 3.75  |
| Total         | 21                         | 52.5 | 19                         | 47.5 | 6                              | 15.0 | 34       | 80.0 | 27       | 33.75 | 53       | 66.25 |

*Note.* Sex orient = Sexual orientation, Hetero = Heterosexual, Bi = Bisexual.

Table 5 shows the relationship status of all participants. In this study, *married* denotes any participant who is presently married regardless of whether s/he was previously married. *Divorced* includes any participant who was previously married and divorced and is not currently involved in a romantic relationship. *Single* refers to any participant who is not in a romantic relationship and has not been previously married. *Partnered* denotes a participant who may or may not have been previously married, but who is presently involved in a long-term romantic relationship.

Nineteen (10 men, 9 women, 47.5%) Zen Buddhists and 28 (4 men, 24 women, 70%) non-Buddhists were married. Hence, as compared to Zen Buddhists, approximately

one third more non-Buddhists were married. The number of those who were divorced was close to equal between religious groups. More than twice as many Zen Buddhists (3 men, 2 women, 12.5%) were partnered in long-term relationships, as compared to non-Buddhists (1 man, 1 woman, 5%). One Zen Buddhist man was engaged. Among Zen Buddhists, 5 (12.5%) men were single. Among non-Buddhists, 3 women (7.5%) were single. Hence, as compared to non-Buddhists, approximately one third more Zen Buddhists were single.

Table 5

*Relationship Status by Sex and Religious Affiliation*

| Rel status | Zen Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 40 |      |          |      | Non-Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 40 |      |          |      | All participants<br><i>N</i> = 80 |       |          |       |
|------------|-------------------------------|------|----------|------|-------------------------------|------|----------|------|-----------------------------------|-------|----------|-------|
|            | Men                           |      | Women    |      | Men                           |      | Women    |      | Men                               |       | Women    |       |
|            | <i>N</i>                      | %    | <i>N</i> | %    | <i>N</i>                      | %    | <i>N</i> | %    | <i>N</i>                          | %     | <i>N</i> | %     |
| Married    | 10                            | 25.0 | 9        | 22.5 | 4                             | 10.0 | 24       | 60.0 | 14                                | 17.50 | 33       | 41.25 |
| Divorced   | 2                             | 5.0  | 6        | 15.0 | 1                             | 2.5  | 5        | 12.5 | 3                                 | 3.75  | 11       | 13.75 |
| Single     | 5                             | 12.5 | 0        |      | 0                             |      | 3        | 7.5  | 5                                 | 6.25  | 3        | 3.75  |
| Partnered  | 3                             | 7.5  | 2        | 5.0  | 1                             | 2.5  | 1        | 2.5  | 4                                 | 5.00  | 3        | 3.75  |
| Engaged    | 1                             | 2.5  | 0        |      | 0                             |      | 0        |      | 1                                 | 1.25  | 0        |       |
| Widowed    | 1                             | 2.5  | 3        | 7.5  | 0                             |      | 1        | 2.5  | 1                                 | 1.25  | 4        | 5.00  |

*Note.* Rel status = Relationship status.

Of 80 total participants, 47 (58.75%) were married, and marriages ranged from .5-49 years ( $M = 21.49$ ). For Zen Buddhists, marriages ranged from 1-49 years ( $M = 21.49$ ). For non-Buddhists, marriages ranged from .5-49 years ( $M = 22.82$ ). The number of men and women who had been married once and twice was equal between Zen Buddhists and

non-Buddhists, but Zen Buddhists were more likely to have been married either three or four times. While the distribution of men and women among Zen Buddhists was approximately equal, more than twice as many Zen Buddhist women (11, 27.5%) as Zen Buddhist men (4, 10%) had been divorced. The number of Zen Buddhists and non-Buddhists who had been divorced once was approximately equal, but participants who were Zen Buddhist were more likely to have been divorced either two or three times. Results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

*Frequency of Marriage and Divorce by Sex and Religious Affiliation*

| Rel status  | Zen Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 40 |      |          |      | Non-Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 40 |     |          |      | All participants<br><i>N</i> = 80 |      |          |       |
|-------------|-------------------------------|------|----------|------|-------------------------------|-----|----------|------|-----------------------------------|------|----------|-------|
|             | Men                           |      | Women    |      | Men                           |     | Women    |      | Men                               |      | Women    |       |
|             | <i>N</i>                      | %    | <i>N</i> | %    | <i>N</i>                      | %   | <i>N</i> | %    | <i>N</i>                          | %    | <i>N</i> | %     |
| Married 1X  | 2                             | 5.0  | 5        | 12.5 | 2                             | 5.0 | 5        | 12.5 | 4                                 | 5.00 | 10       | 12.50 |
| Married 2X  | 3                             | 7.5  | 7        | 17.5 | 0                             |     | 10       | 25.0 | 3                                 | 3.75 | 17       | 21.25 |
| Married 3X  | 2                             | 5.0  | 2        | 5.0  | 1                             | 2.5 | 0        |      | 3                                 | 3.75 | 2        | 2.50  |
| Married 4X  | 0                             |      | 1        | 2.5  | 0                             |     | 0        |      | 0                                 |      | 1        | 1.25  |
| Divorced 1X | 4                             | 10.0 | 11       | 27.5 | 2                             | 5.0 | 16       | 40.0 | 6                                 | 7.50 | 27       | 33.75 |
| Divorced 2X | 0                             |      | 3        | 7.5  | 1                             | 2.5 | 0        |      | 1                                 | 1.25 | 3        | 3.75  |
| Divorced 3X | 2                             | 5.0  | 1        | 2.5  | 0                             |     | 0        |      | 2                                 | 2.50 | 1        | 1.25  |

*Note.* Rel status = Relationship status.

In terms of relationship status and frequency of marriage and divorce for participants who were classified as secure and insecure on the *ECR-R*, findings are shown in Table 7. Overall, significant results include the rate of marriage among secure and insecure participants. Of Zen Buddhist men, 10 (62.5%) of 16 secure participants were married, whereas no insecure men were married. Among Zen Buddhist women, 8 (53.33%) of 15 secure participants were married, whereas 1 (25%) of 4 insecure women was married. For all Zen Buddhists, over half (18, 58.06%) of those rated as secure were married and 1 (11.11%) of 9 classified as insecure was married. Of non-Buddhist men, 4

(80%) of 5 rated as secure were married, whereas none rated as insecure was married. Over three quarters (21, 77.8%) of non-Buddhist women rated as secure were married, and 3 (42.85%) of 7 rated as insecure were married. For all non-Buddhists, 25 (78.13%) of 31 secure participants were married, and 3 (37.5%) of 8 insecure participants were married. Overall, more (both secure and insecure) non-Buddhists than Zen Buddhists were married. Because insecure participants were less likely to have married, they were more likely to be single and less likely to have been divorced.



Table 7

*Relationship Status and Frequency of Marriage and Divorce by ECR-R Scores*

|             | Zen Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 40 |          |          |          | Non-Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 40 |          |          |          | All participants<br><i>N</i> = 80 |          |          |          |
|-------------|-------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
|             | <i>ECR-R</i> scores           |          |          |          | <i>ECR-R</i> scores           |          |          |          | <i>ECR-R</i> scores               |          |          |          |
|             | M                             |          | W        |          | M                             |          | W        |          | M                                 |          | W        |          |
|             | S                             | I        | S        | I        | S                             | I        | S        | I        | S                                 | I        | S        | I        |
| Rel status  | <i>N</i>                      | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i>                      | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i>                          | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i> |
| Married     | 10                            | 0        | 8        | 1        | 4                             | 0        | 21       | 3        | 14                                | 0        | 29       | 4        |
| Divorced    | 2                             | 0        | 4        | 2        | 0                             | 1        | 4        | 1        | 2                                 | 1        | 8        | 3        |
| Single      | 4                             | 1        | 0        | 0        | 0                             | 0        | 2        | 1        | 4                                 | 1        | 2        | 1        |
| Partnered   | 2                             | 1        | 2        | 0        | 0                             | 0        | 1        | 0        | 2                                 | 1        | 3        | 0        |
| Engaged     | 1                             | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0                             | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1                                 | 0        | 0        | 0        |
| Widowed     | 0                             | 0        | 3        | 0        | 0                             | 0        | 1        | 0        | 0                                 | 0        | 4        | 0        |
| Married 1X  | 9                             | 1        | 6        | 2        | 3                             | 1        | 18       | 3        | 12                                | 2        | 24       | 5        |
| Married 2X  | 2                             | 0        | 7        | 0        | 0                             | 0        | 10       | 1        | 2                                 | 0        | 17       | 1        |
| Married 3X  | 2                             | 0        | 1        | 0        | 1                             | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3                                 | 0        | 1        | 0        |
| Married 4X  | 0                             | 0        | 0        | 1        | 0                             | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0                                 | 0        | 0        | 1        |
| Divorced 1X | 3                             | 1        | 9        | 2        | 1                             | 1        | 14       | 2        | 4                                 | 2        | 23       | 4        |
| Divorced 2X | 0                             | 0        | 3        | 0        | 1                             | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1                                 | 0        | 3        | 0        |
| Divorced 3X | 2                             | 0        | 0        | 1        | 0                             | 0        | 0        | 0        | 2                                 | 0        | 0        | 1        |

*Note.* Rel status = Relationship status.

### *Descriptive Statistics for Major Attachment-Related Circumstances*

Data regarding major attachment-related events occurring in all participants' childhoods were collected during the completion of the demographic questionnaire. For the sake of this study, a major attachment-related event likely to promote attachment insecurity was defined as a situation in which one or both of the child's few primary caregivers were unable to be physically and emotionally present, available, and responsive to the child for an extended period of time, and this was perceived by the child as threatening and resulted in distress and confusion. It was also defined as an event(s) in which the primary caregiver was physically, sexually, and/or emotionally threatening or abusive to the child. Threats to caregiver availability recognized to most frequently result in attachment disruption include "marital conflict, divorce, parental dysfunction or illness, and parent-child conflict . . . when the child *perceives* them as jeopardizing the availability of an attachment figure" (Kobak, 1999, p. 33).

In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC), childhood in this study was defined as the period preceding the age of 18 years (Mower, 1997). The definition of abuse and neglect was borrowed from the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA): "Any act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker, which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation, or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm" (2003).

Thirty-two (80%) Zen Buddhists and 27 (67.5%) non-Buddhists reported one or more major attachment-related events in childhood. A greater percentage of secure Zen Buddhists reported one or more disruptive attachment-related events in childhood than

did secure non-Buddhists, and more insecure non-Buddhists reported one or more disruptive attachment-related events in childhood than did insecure Zen Buddhists. For Zen Buddhists, results were similar between men and women. For non-Buddhists, there were too few men to determine whether results were similar between sexes. Results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

*Major Attachment-Related Events by Sex, Religious Affiliation, and ECR-R Scores*

|     | Events   |        |          |       | No events |       |          |       | Events   |       |          |       | No events |   |  |  |
|-----|----------|--------|----------|-------|-----------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-------|-----------|---|--|--|
|     | Men      |        | Women    |       | Men       |       | Women    |       | Total    |       | Men      |       | Women     |   |  |  |
|     | <i>N</i> | %      | <i>N</i> | %     | <i>N</i>  | %     | <i>N</i> | %     | <i>N</i> | %     | <i>N</i> | %     | <i>N</i>  | % |  |  |
| ZBS | 13       | 81.25  | 3        | 18.75 | 13        | 86.66 | 2        | 13.34 | 26       | 83.87 | 5        | 16.13 |           |   |  |  |
| ZBI | 3        | 60.00  | 2        | 40.00 | 3         | 75.00 | 1        | 25.00 | 6        | 66.67 | 3        | 33.33 |           |   |  |  |
| NBS | 3        | 60.00  | 2        | 40.00 | 17        | 62.96 | 10       | 37.04 | 20       | 62.50 | 12       | 37.50 |           |   |  |  |
| NBI | 1        | 100.00 | 0        |       | 6         | 85.71 | 1        | 14.29 | 7        | 87.50 | 1        | 12.50 |           |   |  |  |

*Note.* Events = Major-attachment related events, ZBS = Zen Buddhist secure, ZBI = Zen Buddhist insecure, NBS =

Non-Buddhist secure, NBI = Non-Buddhist insecure.

Among Zen Buddhist participants, 1 (2.5%) man and 2 (5%) women had a parent die during adolescence. Among non-Buddhist participants, 4 (10%) women had a parent die during adolescence. Results are shown in Table 9.

Table 9

*Participants' Ages at the Time of Parental Death by Sex and Religious Affiliation*

| Age by years | Zen Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 40 |     |          |   | Non-Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 40 |   |          |    | All participants<br><i>N</i> = 80 |      |          |   |
|--------------|-------------------------------|-----|----------|---|-------------------------------|---|----------|----|-----------------------------------|------|----------|---|
|              | Men                           |     | Women    |   | Men                           |   | Women    |    | Men                               |      | Women    |   |
|              | <i>N</i>                      | %   | <i>N</i> | % | <i>N</i>                      | % | <i>N</i> | %  | <i>N</i>                          | %    | <i>N</i> | % |
| 0-4          | 0                             |     | 0        |   | 0                             |   | 0        |    | 0                                 |      | 0        |   |
| 5-9          | 0                             |     | 0        |   | 0                             |   | 0        |    | 0                                 |      | 0        |   |
| 10-14        | 1                             | 2.5 | 0        |   | 0                             |   | 0        |    | 1                                 | 1.25 | 0        |   |
| 15-18        | 0                             |     | 2        | 5 | 0                             |   | 4        | 10 | 0                                 |      | 4        | 5 |
| Total        | 1                             | 2.5 | 2        | 5 | 0                             |   | 4        | 10 | 1                                 | 1.25 | 4        | 5 |

Of 40 Zen Buddhist participants, 11 (6 men, 5 women, 27.5%) experienced parental divorce in childhood. Among 40 non-Buddhist participants, 14 (3 men, 11 women, 35%) experienced parental divorce in childhood. For all participants, the age at the time of the divorce ranged from early childhood to late adolescence. Results are shown in Table 10.

Table 10

*Participant' Ages at the Time of Parental Divorce by Sex and Religious Affiliation*

| Age by years | Zen Buddhist<br>N = 40 |      |       |      | Non-Buddhist<br>N = 40 |     |       |      | All participants<br>N = 80 |       |       |       |
|--------------|------------------------|------|-------|------|------------------------|-----|-------|------|----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
|              | Men                    |      | Women |      | Men                    |     | Women |      | Men                        |       | Women |       |
|              | N                      | %    | N     | %    | N                      | %   | N     | %    | N                          | %     | N     | %     |
| 0-4          | 1                      | 2.5  | 1     | 2.5  | 1                      | 2.5 | 6     | 15.0 | 2                          | 2.50  | 7     | 8.75  |
| 5-9          | 2                      | 5.0  | 3     | 7.5  | 0                      |     | 1     | 2.5  | 2                          | 2.50  | 4     | 5.00  |
| 10-14        | 2                      | 5.0  | 1     | 2.5  | 2                      | 5.0 | 2     | 5.0  | 4                          | 5.00  | 3     | 3.75  |
| 15-19        | 1                      | 2.5  | 0     |      | 0                      |     | 2     | 5.0  | 1                          | 1.25  | 2     | 2.50  |
| Total        | 6                      | 15.0 | 5     | 12.5 | 3                      | 7.5 | 11    | 27.5 | 9                          | 11.25 | 16    | 20.00 |

Major attachment-related events occurring in Zen Buddhist and non-Buddhist participants' childhoods are summarized in Table 11. One third more non-Buddhists reported divorce and parental substance abuse, as compared with the report of Zen Buddhists in that regard. Twice as many Zen Buddhists reported childhood physical abuse, and approximately three times as many reported emotional abuse, as compared with non-Buddhists. Eight Zen Buddhists (5 men, 3 women, 20%) and 12 non-Buddhists (2 men, 10 women, 30%) reported no major attachment-related events in childhood. Other major attachment-related events were reported in roughly equal amounts between Buddhists and non-Buddhists. The age of those participants at the time of these events cannot be reported, for many events were recurrent and took place during widely varying time intervals. Additionally, with the exception of parental death and divorce, their age and the events' duration were difficult for many participants to recall.

Table 11

*Major Attachment-Related Events by Sex and Religious Affiliation*

| Event      | Zen Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 40 |      |          |      | Non-Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 40 |     |          |      | All participants<br><i>N</i> = 80 |       |          |       |
|------------|-------------------------------|------|----------|------|-------------------------------|-----|----------|------|-----------------------------------|-------|----------|-------|
|            | Men                           |      | Women    |      | Men                           |     | Women    |      | Men                               |       | Women    |       |
|            | <i>N</i>                      | %    | <i>N</i> | %    | <i>N</i>                      | %   | <i>N</i> | %    | <i>N</i>                          | %     | <i>N</i> | %     |
| Death      | 1                             | 2.5  | 2        | 5.0  | 0                             |     | 4        | 10.0 | 1                                 | 1.25  | 6        | 7.50  |
| Separation | 8                             | 20.0 | 7        | 17.5 | 3                             | 7.5 | 11       | 27.5 | 11                                | 13.75 | 18       | 22.50 |
| Mental     | 6                             | 15.0 | 7        | 17.5 | 2                             | 5.0 | 10       | 25.0 | 8                                 | 10.00 | 17       | 21.25 |
| Divorce    | 6                             | 15.0 | 5        | 12.5 | 3                             | 7.5 | 11       | 27.5 | 8                                 | 10.00 | 16       | 20.00 |
| Illness    | 2                             | 5.0  | 4        | 10.0 | 1                             | 2.5 | 5        | 12.5 | 3                                 | 3.75  | 9        | 11.25 |
| Substance  | 7                             | 17.5 | 3        | 7.5  | 0                             |     | 14       | 35.0 | 7                                 | 8.75  | 17       | 21.25 |
| Sexual     | 2                             | 5.0  | 1        | 2.5  | 0                             |     | 4        | 10.0 | 2                                 | 2.50  | 5        | 6.25  |
| Physical   | 6                             | 15.0 | 5        | 12.5 | 1                             | 2.5 | 4        | 10.0 | 7                                 | 8.75  | 9        | 11.25 |
| Emotional  | 8                             | 20.0 | 8        | 20.0 | 0                             |     | 6        | 15.0 | 8                                 | 10.00 | 14       | 17.50 |
| Domestic   | 3                             | 7.5  | 0        |      | 0                             |     | 2        | 5.0  | 3                                 | 7.50  | 2        | 2.50  |
| Neglect    | 1                             | 2.5  | 0        |      | 0                             |     | 3        | 7.5  | 1                                 | 1.25  | 3        | 3.75  |
| None       | 5                             | 12.5 | 3        | 7.5  | 2                             | 5.0 | 10       | 25.0 | 7                                 | 8.75  | 13       | 16.25 |

*Note.* Illness = Prolonged physical illness, Mental = Mental disorder, Substance = Substance abuse, Sexual = Sexual abuse, Physical = Physical Abuse, Emotional = Emotional abuse, Domestic = Domestic violence.

For all major disruptive attachment-related events in both religious groups, descriptive statistics revealed that approximately one quarter to one third of individuals who experienced one or more of these events were, in most instances, classified on the *ECR-R* with an insecure attachment status. Hence, the majority of those who reported one

or more disruptive attachment-related events in childhood scored as secure on the *ECR-R* in both groups. Furthermore, the same results were found for participants who did not report any major attachment-related events occurring in childhood. Of Zen Buddhists, 2 of 5 men and 1 of 3 women who did not report any disruptive attachment events scored as insecure on the *ECR-R*. For non-Buddhists, the same applied for 1 of 10 women. Results are shown in Table 12.

Table 12

*Major Attachment-Related Events by ECR-R Scores*

| Event      | Zen Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 40 |          |          |          | Non-Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 40 |          |          |          | All participants<br><i>N</i> = 80 |          |          |          |
|------------|-------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
|            | <i>ECR-R</i> scores           |          |          |          | <i>ECR-R</i> scores           |          |          |          | <i>ECR-R</i> scores               |          |          |          |
|            | M                             |          | W        |          | M                             |          | W        |          | M                                 |          | W        |          |
|            | S                             | I        | S        | I        | S                             | I        | S        | I        | S                                 | I        | S        | I        |
|            | <i>N</i>                      | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i>                      | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i>                          | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i> |
| Death      | 1                             | 0        | 2        | 0        | 0                             | 0        | 3        | 1        | 1                                 | 0        | 5        | 1        |
| Separation | 6                             | 2        | 6        | 1        | 2                             | 1        | 9        | 2        | 8                                 | 3        | 15       | 3        |
| Mental     | 4                             | 2        | 7        | 0        | 1                             | 1        | 7        | 3        | 5                                 | 3        | 14       | 3        |
| Divorce    | 4                             | 2        | 4        | 1        | 2                             | 1        | 9        | 2        | 6                                 | 3        | 13       | 3        |
| Illness    | 1                             | 1        | 3        | 1        | 1                             | 0        | 3        | 2        | 2                                 | 1        | 6        | 3        |
| Substance  | 6                             | 1        | 1        | 2        | 0                             | 0        | 11       | 3        | 6                                 | 1        | 12       | 5        |
| Sexual     | 2                             | 0        | 1        | 0        | 0                             | 0        | 3        | 1        | 2                                 | 0        | 4        | 1        |
| Physical   | 6                             | 0        | 5        | 0        | 1                             | 0        | 4        | 0        | 7                                 | 0        | 9        | 0        |
| Emotional  | 6                             | 2        | 6        | 2        | 0                             | 0        | 6        | 0        | 6                                 | 2        | 12       | 2        |
| Domestic   | 3                             | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0                             | 0        | 1        | 1        | 3                                 | 0        | 1        | 1        |
| Neglect    | 1                             | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0                             | 0        | 2        | 1        | 1                                 | 0        | 2        | 1        |
| None       | 3                             | 2        | 2        | 1        | 2                             | 0        | 9        | 1        | 5                                 | 2        | 11       | 2        |

*Note.* Illness = Prolonged physical illness, Mental = Mental disorder, Substance = Substance abuse, Sexual = Sexual abuse, Physical = Physical abuse, Emotional = Emotional abuse, Domestic = Domestic violence, S = Secure, I = Insecure.



In Table 13, it may be seen that this pattern of secure and insecure attachment scores also often occurred regardless of the number of events that reportedly took place in participants' childhoods.

Table 13

*Number of Major Attachment-related Events Reported and ECR-R Scores*

|             | Zen Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 40 |          |          |          | Non-Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 40 |          |          |          | All participants<br><i>N</i> = 80 |          |          |          |
|-------------|-------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
|             | <i>ECR-R</i> scores           |          |          |          | <i>ECR-R</i> scores           |          |          |          | <i>ECR-R</i> scores               |          |          |          |
|             | M                             |          | W        |          | M                             |          | W        |          | M                                 |          | W        |          |
|             | S                             | I        | S        | I        | S                             | I        | S        | I        | S                                 | I        | S        | I        |
| # of events | <i>N</i>                      | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i>                      | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i>                          | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>N</i> |
| 0           | 3                             | 2        | 2        | 1        | 2                             | 0        | 9        | 1        | 5                                 | 2        | 11       | 2        |
| 1           | 4                             | 0        | 4        | 2        | 0                             | 0        | 3        | 1        | 4                                 | 0        | 7        | 3        |
| 2           | 2                             | 1        | 3        | 0        | 2                             | 0        | 3        | 2        | 4                                 | 1        | 6        | 2        |
| 3           | 3                             | 1        | 3        | 0        | 1                             | 1        | 3        | 1        | 4                                 | 1        | 6        | 1        |
| 4           | 1                             | 0        | 1        | 0        | 0                             | 0        | 7        | 1        | 1                                 | 0        | 8        | 1        |
| 5           | 1                             | 1        | 0        | 1        | 0                             | 0        | 1        | 0        | 1                                 | 1        | 1        | 1        |
| 6           | 1                             | 0        | 1        | 0        | 0                             | 0        | 0        | 0        | 1                                 | 0        | 1        | 0        |
| 7           | 1                             | 0        | 1        | 0        | 0                             | 0        | 1        | 1        | 1                                 | 0        | 2        | 1        |
| 8           | 0                             | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0                             | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0                                 | 0        | 0        | 0        |

*Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Adult Attachment Questionnaire Results*

The two primary attachment styles of avoidance and anxiety for all participants were assessed with the *Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Adult Attachment*

*Questionnaire.* The *ECR-R* is a 36-item, self-report attachment measure with items rated on a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Test items are presented to respondents in randomized order, and responses on two 18-item subscales yield separate scores for each subscale (Avoidance and Anxiety) with the lowest possible score as 18 and the highest possible score as 126 on both scales. The Anxiety scores for all respondents ranged from 18-105 ( $M = 49.29$ ,  $SD = 21.14$ ). The Avoidance scores for all respondents ranged from 18-99 ( $M = 45.4$ ,  $SD = 18.1$ ). Scores are shown in Table 14. Between Zen Buddhists and non-Buddhists, all scores were approximately equal.

Table 14

*ECR-R Anxiety and Avoidance Scores*

|           | Zen Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 40 |       |          | Non-Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 40 |       |          | Total<br><i>N</i> = 80 |       |          |
|-----------|-------------------------------|-------|----------|-------------------------------|-------|----------|------------------------|-------|----------|
|           | AX                            | AV    | <i>M</i> | AX                            | AV    | <i>M</i> | AX                     | AV    | <i>M</i> |
| <i>M</i>  | 50.70                         | 44.46 | 47.59    | 47.88                         | 46.33 | 47.12    | 49.29                  | 45.40 | 47.35    |
| <i>SD</i> | 21.12                         | 15.91 | 18.52    | 21.33                         | 20.21 | 20.77    | 21.14                  | 18.09 | 19.62    |
| Minimum   | 18.00                         | 18.00 | 18.00    | 18.00                         | 18.00 | 18.00    | 18.00                  | 18.00 | 18.00    |
| Maximum   | 105.00                        | 78.00 | 92.00    | 102.00                        | 99.00 | 101.00   | 105.00                 | 99.00 | 102.00   |

*Note.* AX = Anxiety, AV = Avoidance.

As previously discussed, because cutoff scores for this measure could not be obtained, the cutoff score for both subscales was determined to be 72. This was chosen because 72 is the midpoint between the lowest (18) and highest (126) possible scores on Anxiety and Avoidance subscales. Attachment classifications for all participants were then determined by plotting Anxiety and Avoidance scores in an XY scatterplot representing a two-dimensional model of attachment-related anxiety and avoidance

comparable to the one found at <http://www.yourpersonality.net>. This model places participants into one of four attachment quadrants: (a) secure (low attachment-related anxiety and avoidance), (b) preoccupied (low attachment-related avoidance and high attachment-related anxiety), (c) fearful-avoidant (high attachment-related anxiety and avoidance), and (d) dismissing (low attachment-related anxiety and high attachment-related avoidance). From their responses reflected in these quadrants, participants may be classified as secure or insecure. Insecure respondents have a preoccupied, fearful-avoidant, or dismissing attachment style, whereas secure respondents have low attachment-related anxiety and avoidance.

More than three quarters of all participants (63, 78.75%) scored as having a secure attachment style. This was followed by approximately one tenth who had a preoccupied attachment style (9, 11.25%). Five (6.25%) had a dismissing attachment style, and 3 (3.75%) had fearful-avoidant styles. For Zen Buddhists, 77% (31) were classified as secure, 12% (5) were classified as preoccupied, 7% (3) were classified as dismissing, and 2% (1) was classified as fearful-avoidant. For non-Buddhists, 80% (32) were classified as secure, 10% (4) were classified as preoccupied, 5% (2) were classified as dismissing, and 5% (2) were classified as fearful-avoidant. “Normative” American attachment patterns obtained by Ainsworth et al. (1978), based on a three-category model of attachment, include the following: 70% secure, 20% anxious-avoidant, and 10% anxious-resistant. Because this study utilizes a four-category model of attachment, the categories suggested by Ainsworth et al. are better expressed as 70% secure and 30% insecure for research purposes. Results are shown in Table 15.

Table 15

*Attachment Style Classifications by Religious Affiliation*

| Religious affiliation | Attachment classifications |              |          |              |          |             |          |             | Total     |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------------|----------|--------------|----------|-------------|----------|-------------|-----------|
|                       | S                          |              | P        |              | D        |             | FA       |             |           |
|                       | <i>N</i>                   | %            | <i>N</i> | %            | <i>N</i> | %           | <i>N</i> | %           |           |
| Zen Buddhist          | 31                         | 77.50        | 5        | 12.50        | 3        | 7.50        | 1        | 2.50        | 40        |
| Non-Buddhist          | 32                         | 80.00        | 4        | 10.00        | 2        | 5.00        | 2        | 5.00        | 40        |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>63</b>                  | <b>78.75</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>11.25</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>6.25</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>3.75</b> | <b>80</b> |

Note. S = Secure, P = Preoccupied, D = Dismissing, FA = Fearful-avoidant.

*Chi-Square and MANOVA Analysis*

The overarching research inquiry guiding the quantitative component of this study was, How does Zen Buddhist meditation practice affect the attachment classifications of American practitioners' when compared with the attachment classifications of American non-Buddhists? In order to investigate this, the present work examined three specific questions: (a) is there a relationship between years of mediation and Anxiety scores, Avoidance scores, or the average score on both dimensions, (b) is there a relationship between religious affiliation and Anxiety scores, Avoidance scores, or the average score in both dimensions, and (c) how do the attachment ratings for American Zen Buddhists compare to the "normative" American attachment patterns (70% secure, 20% anxious-avoidant, and 10% anxious-resistant) obtained by Ainsworth et al. (1978)?

No significant relationship was found between years of meditation and Anxiety scores, ( $r = -.09$ ,  $n = 40$ ,  $p = .57$ , two-tails), between years of meditation and Avoidance scores, ( $r = -.20$ ,  $n = 40$ ,  $p = .22$ , two-tails), or between years of meditation and the

average score on both attachment dimensions, ( $r = -.18$ ,  $n = 40$ ,  $p = .28$ , two-tails).

Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Moreover, a MANOVA indicated that there was no difference between religious affiliation and Anxiety scores,  $F(1, 79) = .48$ ,  $p = .49$ , religious affiliation and Avoidance scores,  $F(1, 79) = .26$ ,  $p = .61$ , and religious affiliation and the average score on both attachment dimensions,  $F(1,79) = .02$ ,  $p = .89$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

How do the attachment ratings for American Zen Buddhists compare to the “normative” American attachment patterns (70% secure, 20% anxious-avoidant, and 10% anxious-resistant) obtained by Ainsworth et al. (1978)? For comparative purposes, American attachment patterns can be classified as 70% secure and 30% insecure. Among Zen Buddhists in the sample, 77.5% (31) had secure attachment styles. The remaining 22.5% (10) had insecure attachment styles. The chi-square test for goodness of fit revealed that, when compared with Ainsworth et al.’s American attachment patterns, there was no statistically significant difference between Zen Buddhist attachment styles and American attachment norms,  $X^2(1, .05) = 1.07143$ . There was also no significant difference between American attachment norms and non-Buddhist attachment styles,  $X^2(1, .05) = 1.9048$ . A chi-square test also indicated that there was no difference between the attachment styles of Buddhists and non-Buddhists,  $X^2(1, .05) = 2.9762$ .

#### *Demographic Profile of Interviewee Sample*

A total of 16 participants (8 Zen Buddhists and 8 non-Buddhists) was selected for the interview process. For both Buddhist and non-Buddhist participants, the 4 participants with the highest scores on the Anxiety and Avoidance subscales and the 4 participants

with the lowest scores on the Anxiety and Avoidance subscales on the *ECR-R* (a total of 8 from each group) were selected to participate in an interview. Of 8 non-Buddhist participants who were interviewed, 6 were Christian (4 active, 2 non-active), 1 was agnostic, and 1 participant did not identify with any religious faith. Of 8 Zen Buddhists, length of formal practice inclusive of daily meditation ranged from 7-35 years ( $M = 19.25$ ). Results are shown in Table 16.

Table 16

*Years Meditation Practice for Zen Buddhist Interviewees*

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| Years | <i>N</i> | %     | Range | <i>M</i> |
|-------|----------|-------|-------|----------|
| 1-4   | 0        |       |       |          |
| 5-9   | 2        | 25.0  |       |          |
| 10-14 | 2        | 25.0  |       |          |
| 15-19 | 0        |       |       |          |
| 20-24 | 1        | 12.5  |       |          |
| 25-29 | 1        | 12.5  |       |          |
| 30-34 | 0        |       |       |          |
| 35-39 | 2        | 25.0  |       |          |
| Total | 8        | 100.0 | 7-35  | 19.25    |

---

Of 16 total interviewees, 4 were men, and 12 were women. Among Zen Buddhists, 4 were men, and 4 were women. All non-Buddhist interviewees were women. The age range of 70-79 years was not represented in either group. The age range of 40-49 years was not represented among Zen Buddhists, and the age range of 80 to 89 years was not represented among non-Buddhists. One Zen Buddhist participant was bisexual. All

other participants identified as heterosexual. Demographics of the group of 16 interviewees are shown in Table 17.

Table 17

*Demographic Profile of Interviewee Sample by Sex and Age Range*

| Age by years | Zen Buddhist <i>N</i> = 8 |      |          |      | Non-Buddhist <i>N</i> = 8 |   |          |     | All participants <i>N</i> = 16 |       |          |       |
|--------------|---------------------------|------|----------|------|---------------------------|---|----------|-----|--------------------------------|-------|----------|-------|
|              | Men                       |      | Women    |      | Men                       |   | Women    |     | Men                            |       | Women    |       |
|              | <i>N</i>                  | %    | <i>N</i> | %    | <i>N</i>                  | % | <i>N</i> | %   | <i>N</i>                       | %     | <i>N</i> | %     |
| 40-49        | 0                         |      | 0        |      | 0                         |   | 2        | 25  | 0                              |       | 2        | 12.50 |
| 50-59        | 2                         | 25.0 | 3        | 37.5 | 0                         |   | 4        | 50  | 2                              | 12.50 | 7        | 43.75 |
| 60-69        | 1                         | 12.5 | 1        | 12.5 | 0                         |   | 2        | 25  | 1                              | 6.25  | 3        | 18.75 |
| 70-79        | 0                         |      | 0        |      | 0                         |   | 0        |     | 0                              |       | 0        |       |
| 80-89        | 1                         | 12.5 | 0        |      | 0                         |   | 0        |     | 1                              | 6.25  | 0        |       |
| Total        | 4                         | 50.0 | 4        | 50.0 | 0                         |   | 8        | 100 | 4                              | 25.00 | 12       | 75.00 |

Of 16 total interviewees, 11 (3 men, 8 women, 68.75%) were married. Two (12.5%) women were divorced. One participant (6.25%) was single. Two participants (1 man, 1 woman, 12.5%) were partnered in long-term relationships. These further demographics are shown in Table 18.

Table 18

*Relationship Status for Interviewee Sample by Sex and Religious Affiliation*

| Rel<br>status | Zen Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 8 |      |          |      | Non-Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 8 |   |          |      | All participants<br><i>N</i> = 16 |       |          |       |
|---------------|------------------------------|------|----------|------|------------------------------|---|----------|------|-----------------------------------|-------|----------|-------|
|               | Men                          |      | Women    |      | Men                          |   | Women    |      | Men                               |       | Women    |       |
|               | <i>N</i>                     | %    | <i>N</i> | %    | <i>N</i>                     | % | <i>N</i> | %    | <i>N</i>                          | %     | <i>N</i> | %     |
| Married       | 3                            | 37.5 | 2        | 25.0 | 0                            |   | 6        |      | 3                                 | 18.75 | 8        | 50.00 |
| Divorced      | 0                            |      | 1        | 12.5 | 0                            |   | 1        | 12.5 | 0                                 |       | 2        | 12.50 |
| Single        | 0                            |      | 0        |      | 0                            |   | 1        | 12.5 | 0                                 |       | 1        | 6.25  |
| Partnered     | 1                            | 12.5 | 1        | 12.5 | 0                            |   | 0        |      | 1                                 | 6.25  | 1        | 6.25  |
| Engaged       | 0                            |      | 0        |      | 0                            |   | 0        |      | 0                                 |       | 0        |       |
| Widowed       | 0                            |      | 0        |      | 0                            |   | 0        |      | 0                                 |       | 0        |       |

*Note.* Rel status = Relationship status.

Table 19 shows the frequency of marriage and divorce for interviewees. For 8 (3 men, 5 women, 50%) participants, this was their only marriage. Three (18.75%) women, 2 Zen Buddhists and 1 non-Buddhist, were presently married in a second marriage. Six participants had been divorced once, and 1 participant had been divorced twice. Between groups, a total of 5 Zen Buddhists and 2 non-Buddhists had been divorced.



Table 19

*Frequency of Marriage and Divorce by Sex and Religious Affiliation for Interviewee Sample*

|             | Zen Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 8 |      |          |      | Non-Buddhist<br><i>N</i> = 8 |   |          |      | All participants<br><i>N</i> = 16 |       |          |       |
|-------------|------------------------------|------|----------|------|------------------------------|---|----------|------|-----------------------------------|-------|----------|-------|
|             | Men                          |      | Women    |      | Men                          |   | Women    |      | Men                               |       | Women    |       |
| Rel status  | <i>N</i>                     | %    | <i>N</i> | %    | <i>N</i>                     | % | <i>N</i> | %    | <i>N</i>                          | %     | <i>N</i> | %     |
| Married 1X  | 3                            | 37.5 | 1        | 12.5 | 0                            |   | 6        | 75.0 | 3                                 | 18.75 | 7        | 43.75 |
| Married 2X  | 0                            |      | 3        | 37.5 | 0                            |   | 1        | 12.5 | 0                                 |       | 4        | 25.00 |
| Married 3X  | 0                            |      | 0        |      | 0                            |   | 0        |      | 0                                 |       | 0        |       |
| Married 4X  | 0                            |      | 0        |      | 0                            |   | 0        |      | 0                                 |       | 0        |       |
| Divorced 1X | 1                            | 12.5 | 3        | 37.5 | 0                            |   | 2        | 25.0 | 1                                 | 6.25  | 3        | 18.75 |
| Divorced 2X | 0                            |      | 1        | 12.5 | 0                            |   | 0        |      | 0                                 |       | 1        | 6.25  |
| Divorced 3X | 0                            |      | 0        |      | 0                            |   | 0        |      | 0                                 |       | 0        |       |

*Note.* Rel status = Relationship status.

Major attachment-related events occurring in interviewees' childhoods are shown in Table 20. Of 16 total participants, 2 non-Buddhist women experienced the death of a parent in the participant's adolescence. One Zen Buddhist man and 3 non-Buddhist women experienced the divorce of their parents in the participants' childhood. Emotional abuse was the type of abuse reported most often by all participants. Mental disorders and substance abuse in caretakers were reported by one quarter of women, and prolonged parental illness was reported by one third; however, men did not report the occurrence of these events.

Table 20

*Major Attachment-Related Events for Interviewee Sample by Sex and Religious Affiliation*

| Event      | Zen Buddhist<br>N = 8 |      |       |      | Non-Buddhist<br>N = 8 |   |       |      | All participants<br>N = 16 |       |       |       |
|------------|-----------------------|------|-------|------|-----------------------|---|-------|------|----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
|            | Men                   |      | Women |      | Men                   |   | Women |      | Men                        |       | Women |       |
|            | N                     | %    | N     | %    | N                     | % | N     | %    | N                          | %     | N     | %     |
| Death      | 0                     |      | 0     |      | 0                     |   | 2     | 25.0 | 0                          |       | 2     | 12.50 |
| Separation | 1                     | 12.5 | 1     | 12.5 | 0                     |   | 2     | 25.0 | 1                          | 6.25  | 3     | 18.75 |
| Mental     | 0                     |      | 1     | 12.5 | 0                     |   | 3     | 37.5 | 0                          |       | 4     | 25.00 |
| Divorce    | 1                     | 12.5 | 0     |      | 0                     |   | 3     | 37.5 | 1                          | 6.25  | 3     | 18.75 |
| Illness    | 0                     |      | 0     |      | 0                     |   | 3     | 37.5 | 0                          |       |       | 18.75 |
| Substance  | 0                     |      | 0     |      | 0                     |   | 4     | 50.0 | 0                          |       | 4     | 25.00 |
| Sexual     | 0                     |      | 0     |      | 0                     |   | 0     |      | 0                          |       | 0     |       |
| Physical   | 1                     | 12.5 | 1     | 12.5 | 0                     |   | 2     | 25.0 | 1                          | 6.25  | 3     | 18.75 |
| Emotional  | 2                     | 25.0 | 2     | 25.0 | 0                     |   | 3     | 37.5 | 2                          | 12.50 | 5     | 31.25 |
| Domestic   | 1                     | 12.5 | 0     |      | 0                     |   | 2     | 25.0 | 1                          | 6.25  | 2     | 12.50 |
| Neglect    | 0                     |      | 0     |      | 0                     |   | 0     |      | 0                          |       | 0     |       |
| None       | 2                     | 25.0 | 1     |      | 0                     |   | 2     | 25.0 | 2                          | 12.50 | 3     | 18.75 |

*Note.* Illness = Prolonged physical illness, Mental = Mental disorder, Substance = Substance abuse, Sexual = Sexual abuse, Physical = Physical abuse, Emotional = Emotional abuse, Domestic = Domestic violence.

Anxiety scores on the *ECR-R* for all interviewed participants ranged from 18-105. The Avoidance scores ranged from 18-99. For Zen Buddhists, the Anxiety scores ranged from 18-105. For non-Buddhists, the Anxiety Scores ranged from 18-102. Avoidance scores for Zen Buddhists ranged from 18-78. Avoidance scores for non-Buddhists ranged

from 18-99. *ECR-R* Anxiety and Avoidance scores and attachment styles for Buddhist and non-Buddhist participants are presented in Table 21.

Table 21

*Interviewees' ECR-R Anxiety and Avoidance Scores and Attachment Styles*

| Zen Buddhist (N = 8) |                         |              |    | Non-Buddhist (N = 8) |                  |              |    |
|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------|----|----------------------|------------------|--------------|----|
|                      |                         | <i>ECR-R</i> |    |                      |                  | <i>ECR-R</i> |    |
| Att s                | Participant             | AX           | AV | Att s                | Participant      | AX           | AV |
| S                    | Barn Owl                | 18           | 18 | S                    | Alpine Lily      | 18           | 18 |
| S                    | Snow Goose              | 18           | 20 | S                    | Beach Strawberry | 18           | 18 |
| S                    | Sage Grouse             | 27           | 23 | S                    | Seaside Daisy    | 18           | 18 |
| S                    | American Goldfinch      | 35           | 19 | S                    | California Poppy | 25           | 18 |
| D                    | Spotted Dove            | 21           | 78 | D                    | Leopard Lily     | 47           | 99 |
| D                    | Canyon Wren             | 62           | 78 | FA                   | Mountain Dogwood | 76           | 82 |
| P                    | Ivory-billed Woodpecker | 80           | 34 | FA                   | Gilia            | 85           | 76 |
| P                    | Mountain Bluebird       | 105          | 57 | P                    | Ninebark         | 102          | 52 |

Note. *ECR-R* = *ECR-R* scores, Att s = Attachment style, AX = Anxiety, AV = Avoidance, S = Secure,

P = Preoccupied, D = Dismissing, FA = Fearful-avoidant.

Those who qualified were asked to participate in a 1-hour interview during which time they were asked to complete the *Self-Defining Memory Questionnaire* and the *Researcher-Developed Questionnaire*. From both Buddhist and non-Buddhist participants, the 4 participants with the highest scores on the Anxiety and Avoidance subscales and the 4 participants with the lowest scores on the Anxiety and Avoidance subscales on the *ECR-R*, a total of 8 from each group, were selected to participate in an interview. One participant qualifying for an interview withdrew from the study and was

replaced by a participant with approximately equivalent *ECR-R* scores. One participant declined to have instructions repeated, and 1 participant provided accounts that did not include any interaction with parents; however, this account was still subject to categorical-content narrative analysis. The length of interviews ranged between 18 and 55 minutes.

### *Categorical-Content Analysis I*

To determine the common types of significant childhood events and parent responses to these events presented by Zen Buddhist and non-Buddhist participants classified as secure and insecure (dismissing, fearful-avoidant, and preoccupied) in regard to adult attachment status as determined by the *ECR-R*, all sentences relating to a single self-defining memory were highlighted on the verbatim transcripts. All the material throughout the text directly related to the action sequence of the memory event was then grouped under the event caption. In some instances, portions of the text were reorganized to maintain temporal sequence, but conversation or subsequent references pertaining to the event that were included to add meaning or provide interpretation were removed. For analytic purposes, the event text was then broken into units that consisted of the shortest grammatically complete sentences that could be obtained. Based on participants' emotional descriptors of events and a review of emotionally driven actions that occurred during events, participants' perception of an event was categorized as (a) positive, (b) negative, (c) neutral, or (d) traumatic, as were their present emotional response(s) and descriptors of the recollected event, in order to determine whether their perspective had shifted over time. Event action content was also grouped into specific instances of direct parent-child interaction and parental and child responses to events. The overall quality of

interactions and responses, as predefined by attachment theorists such as Bowlby (1969/1982, 1973, 1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1988), Ainsworth (1967, 1985), and Main et al. (1985) was then rated as (a) promoting attachment security, (b) promoting attachment insecurity, or (c) neutral. Events promoting attachment security included those in which caregivers demonstrate responsiveness, sensitive attunement, and collaborative communication in response to their child's needs. Conversely, events in which caregivers rejected, ignored, or punished the child's bids for comfort and security were rated as likely to promote attachment insecurity (Bowlby, 1988). Finally, self-defining memories were labeled for the type of event they represented (e.g., parental physical abuse), and between groups commonalities of types of events were sought.

The material from respondents is presented as follows: Transcripts from 2 participants, 1 Zen Buddhist and 1 non-Buddhist, with secure attachment styles are represented first. For those whose transcripts are not represented, a brief summary is offered. Presentation is rank-ordered by *ECR-R* scores in that transcripts from the 2 participants' scoring the lowest on Anxiety and Avoidance subscales are shown. In that category, Zen Buddhists are presented first. Material from 2 participants, 1 Zen Buddhist and 1 non-Buddhist, is also presented for those classified as preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful-avoidant, respectively, and examples from those scoring the highest on Anxiety and/or Avoidance subscales will be shown. Zen Buddhists are again presented first. For the classification of fearful-avoidant, only 1 non-Buddhist participant is depicted, due to the fact that none of the Zen Buddhist interviewees was classified as fearful-avoidant.

*Secure, Zen Buddhist, Barn Owl.* Barn Owl is a 63-year-old man who has been happily married for 37 years and who has been practicing Zen Buddhism for 20 years. His

father left to serve in World War II when Barn Owl was a toddler and returned 5 years later. Barn Owl and his two brothers lived with their abusive mother during that time.

See, our childhood was not all that good. We were out bouncing around from one serious run-in with our mother through another serious run-in with our mother. It was just a long string of run-ins.

He did, however, recall an event in which his father had returned from overseas and came to his school to share with the children about life overseas. This memory is shown in Table 22.

Table 22

*Secure Memory Example, Zen Buddhist, Barn Owl*

---

Event: "Return of the Father"

- 110 I guess one of the ones that comes to me is when my father,  
 110 our father finally returned home from, uh, from overseas.  
 111 He had been in the army for 22 years.  
 112 It was a very, very happy event.  
 113 Uh, we actually had him come over to the school and talk about his adventure  
 and what he could talk about.  
 112 He drew a picture of a boat on the blackboard and all that good stuff because  
 they didn't fly then.  
 115 And, uh, we were quite happy when that occurred.

Participant's recollection of event's emotional content:

- 112 It was a very very happy event.  
 115 And, uh, we were quite happy when that occurred.

Categorization: Positive

Participant's emotional response to the event as an adult:

- 128 Just great.  
 128 It was a nice thing.  
 128 It was good to hook up with Dad again.  
 121 Um, he was an interesting fellow, you know, and in our early life we just  
 didn't get to know him that well until he got home.  
 120 And now, you know, I miss the turkey.  
 121 You know, I miss them both, but that is the way it goes.

Categorization: Positive

*(table continues)*

Table 22 (continued)

*Secure Memory Example, Zen Buddhist, Barn Owl*


---

 Points of interaction between child and parents:

113 Uh, we actually had him come over to the school and talk about his adventure and what he could talk about.

Parent's response to the event:

112 He drew a picture of a boat on the blackboard and all that good stuff because they didn't fly then.

Child's response to the event:

115 And, uh, we were quite happy when that occurred.

Event label: Parent returns after absence.

Summary of parental response:

Parent publically interacts with children in positive manner after long absence.

Summary of child's response:

Child is excited and made happy by reunion and father's attention.

---

Attachment rating: Promoting attachment security to father.

---

*Note.* Numbering in table refers to the line numbering of sentences in the original transcript.

*Secure, Zen Buddhist, Snow Goose.* Snow Goose is a 57-year-old woman who has been married to her second husband for 25 years. She has been practicing Zen Buddhism for 7 years. Growing up, she felt loved and supported by both parents and had many fond memories of her childhood. There were also difficult challenges during her upbringing. Her mother and two siblings had bipolar illness, and her mother died of cancer when Snow Goose was in her 20s.

You know, that was my first real understanding of vulnerability in the people that I loved. . . . My mother's going to and from hospitals, and when she came home, she wasn't herself, and it took a while for her to get completely back. . . . You have these people that love you, but then you start recognizing that, oh, but you can't completely rely on them. Not through anything that they would choose, but just because that's the way it is.

*Secure, Zen Buddhist, Sage Grouse.* Sage Grouse is a 62-year-old woman with two grown children who has been married to her second husband for 34 years. She has practiced Zen Buddhism for 25 years and was recently ordained as a lay Zen Buddhist priest. Her father was well respected in the community she grew up in, but incidents of abuse occurred in the home.

I—at this point there is part of me that just . . . it's like I have a kind of a detached . . . when I, when I think about it, I feel a sadness. The sadness at this point is knowing what it did to my relationship with my father and my fundamental sense of who I was in the world for many many years. And, um, so, there's also a kind of, um, uh, what's the word, it's a kind of awe at how we can take events . . . or they take our body and our psyche and can so define us .

*Secure, Zen Buddhist, American Goldfinch.* American Goldfinch is a 57-year-old man who has been happily married for 25 years and who has been practicing Zen Buddhism for 25 years. He reported growing up in a household where both parents were consistently loving, available, and supportive toward him and his brother.

I mean there is [sic] a lot of memories of me as a kid with my parents, but they are sort of all muddled together. I guess looking through all of these old pictures and everything . . . there were a lot of experiences as a kid with my parents sort of being very nurturing and protecting, kind of, and you always felt loved and taken care of. And there are so many like that.

*Secure, non-Buddhist, Alpine Lily.* Alpine Lily is a 67-year-old woman who is a born-again Christian and has been married for 42 years. She cares for several foster children in her home, and she is an active and dedicated member of her church. She and her two siblings were raised by loving and kind parents who enjoyed spending time with their children.

Well, family to my family was extremely important . . . everything was very family oriented. . . . And that's what I have tried to do with my seven children, to make family very important for them. That they have memories of one another. That they have—we used to do crazy fun things together as a family, and that is



something I have really tried to pass on. I get that from my parents.

Table 23 represents a memory she recalls from childhood when she was traveling with her family by train.

Table 23

*Secure Memory Example, Non-Buddhist, Alpine Lily*

---

Event: “The Monster on the Train”  
 042 and, um, we’re coming back—  
 042 we’d been in Florida,  
 042 my parents and my sisters and I had been in Florida for Christmas for about a  
 month or so,  
 043 and we were coming back on the train,  
 044 And, um . . . I got, uh, chickenpox on the way home.  
 044 And it was a long trip,  
 045 And my parents had to keep me carefully away from, um, um, other people,  
 my sisters,  
 045 so they sort of divided us up.  
 046 My mother took care of me,  
 046 and Dad took care of the sisters and put us in separate rooms.  
 047 Well, we—I finally, after the first day, I was running a very high fever,  
 048 And I—we had to leave where we were sleeping—there were like bunks on  
 the old trains—to go to the bathroom.  
 049 And I, I, I very, I very remember, I was horribly sick,  
 050 and my mother took me to the bathroom,  
 050 and this lady was coming out of the bathroom,  
 051 and she screamed, “There’s a monster on the train!”  
 051 And, just, I mean, it upset me,  
 067 At the time, I was just scared because she was screaming so loudly,  
 052 and I just looked around, where’s this monster?  
 053 I had no idea it was me, you know,  
 053 And, uh, [she] just screamed and hollered and carried on,  
 053 and people came from all over the place,  
 054 so my mother took me in the bathroom,  
 054 And she said, “Well, I don’t know what that lady was talking about.”  
 055 I realized, I realized she was talking about me.  
 056 And I really felt badly,  
 057 but I, I was not a monster.

Participant’s recollection of event’s emotional content:

051 And, just, I mean, it upset me,  
 067 At the time, I was just scared because she was screaming so loudly,

*(table continues)*

Table 23 (continued)

*Secure Memory Example, Non-Buddhist, Alpine Lily*

---

052 I had no idea it was me, you know,  
 056 And I really felt badly.

Categorization: Negative

Participant's emotional response to the event as an adult:

056 We've [mother and I] have laughed about that a lot of times since then  
 070 I just remember it was a pretty funny thing afterwards.  
 071 We used to laugh about it a lot.

Categorization: Positive

Points of interaction between child and parents

045 so they sort of divided us up.  
 046 My mother took care of me,  
 046 and Dad took care of the sisters and put us in separate rooms.  
 054 so my mother took me in the bathroom,  
 054 And she said, "Well, I don't know what that lady was talking about."

Parent's response to the event:

054 so my mother took me in the bathroom,  
 054 And she said, "Well, I don't know what that lady was talking about."

Child's response to the event

051 And, just, I mean, it upset me,  
 067 At the time, I was just scared because she was screaming so loudly,  
 056 And I really felt badly.

Event label: Positive parent-child interaction.

Summary of parental response:

Parent cares for sick child and dispels negative evaluation made by stranger.

Summary of child's response: Child is confused and shamed by negative evaluation.

Attachment rating: Promoting attachment security to mother.

*Note.* Numbering in table refers to the line numbering of sentences in the original transcript.

*Secure, non-Buddhist, Beach Strawberry.* Beach Strawberry is a 50-year-old woman who has been married for 24 years, and she has a son. She identifies as Catholic

but does not actively participate in religious activities. She grew up in a family fraught with conflict, and her father was an alcoholic who was rarely home. She noted her self-image was changed in a positive way through her husband's love and support.

. . . . um, and my husband, whom I met when I was 21, and he was 19, so essentially in many ways grew up together in our 20s, um, I think the experience of meeting him and of having, of being in relationship with him and realizing there is such a thing as a normal relationship, and a person you could rely on, and a person that you could trust . . . and I think . . . his view of me transformed my view of myself in terms of seeing me as a person through the eyes of someone who loved me.

*Secure, non-Buddhist, California Poppy.* California Poppy is a 52-year-old woman who has been married for 31 years. She is highly involved in her church's community and attends church twice per week. She has three brothers, and she grew up in a close and loving family. She remains close with her parents as an adult and sees to their care as they age.

I just, um, I just think about how, how much I love my parents and, and did from an early age, you know, um, so I guess it just, it just left an impression on me enough to be able to remember it that I didn't ever want to take my parents for granted.

*Secure, non-Buddhist, Seaside Daisy.* Seaside Daisy is a 52-year-old woman who has been married for 31 years. She has a strong religious faith and is actively involved with a Presbyterian church. As a child, she and her siblings were neglected by alcoholic parents.

No, we were never, there was no abuse. I mean, it was obviously abusive, but not what one would consider, you know, when you are thinking about things like slapping, hitting, shouting, screaming, name calling, things like that. We just weren't even there, but I tell you what—there is a form of abuse that does not engage the person at all, and I believe that's exactly what we had, which is, you know, tragic. You really are a non-person. You have no importance. You have no sense of value or of yourself, and you don't belong to anyone. . . . You know, when you have nothing, you're just like a stick of furniture.

Seaside Daisy, however, was close with her grandmother as a child and adolescent, and she feels that this relationship, as well as her faith in Jesus Christ provided her with love and emotional support she would not otherwise have received.

*Dismissing (insecure), Zen Buddhist, Spotted Dove.* Spotted Dove is a 56-year-old bisexual woman who has been practicing Zen Buddhism for 14 years. She had been married and divorced twice, and she is presently in a long-term relationship. She did not report abuse in her childhood, but she often felt invisible and unable to find her voice, which is a theme she has also worked with as an adult.

And I feel sad about all that message that I took in about being invisible, and it has a lot to do with invisibility, and, um . . . invisibility is, um, uh, a self-definition that I've had to constantly work with my entire life, and so that moment seems like important that way, and it makes me sad to think that something that small, in a way, can have such a big effect, and it wasn't abuse, and it wasn't anything like that, you know, but even that small of a thing had such a big effect on me.

Table 24

*Dismissing (Insecure) Memory Example, Zen Buddhist, Spotted Dove*

---

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| Event | “Naughty Child”   |
| :     |   |
| 139   | And, um, I am just playing around   |
| 139   | I think, um, [I was] just hiding behind a big chair in the living room.       |
| 140   | And I just stay back there,   |
| 140   | and I don't know why.   |
| 140   | and then I heard my mom looking for me,                                       |
| 141   | and I kept hiding,  |
| 141   | and then she asked all the other kids—my brothers and my sisters—where I was, |
| 142   | and nobody knew where I was.  |
| 142   | And then I heard her.   |
| 142   | She seemed to be getting really anxious,                                      |
| 143   | and I thought, I thought I would get into trouble if I came out,              |
| 143   | so I stayed there.  |
| 143   | My little brother, who was a baby, crawled by,                                |
| 144   | and he saw me, but he couldn't talk,  |

*(table continues)*

Table 24 (continued)

*Dismissing (Insecure) Memory Example, Zen Buddhist, Spotted Dove*


---

144 and I kept listening to my mother,  
 145 and then she was sending people next door and out of the house to look for  
 me,  
 146 and I could tell the tension was really rising, you know.  
 147 And I didn't know what to do,  
 147 so I kept staying there,  
 147 and then I kind of remember that, you know, they couldn't find me.  
 148 And my mother was going to call the police or something,  
 149 and either I came out,  
 150 or, an older brother saw me and saw that I was there.  
 150 And I remember being really scared about getting into trouble,  
 150 and, um, and I think my mother was really angry with me.  
 151 I think she yelled and said, you know, "Where were you? Why didn't you  
 come out? You know, we were all worried, and I don't have time for this!"  
 154 And it was conveyed to me that I really shouldn't cause those kinds of  
 problems for her,  
 156 and this all took place right there,  
 157 and my father wasn't home.  
 157 In the dining room, all the kids were there and everything.

## Participant's recollection of event's emotional content:

143 and I thought, I thought I would get into trouble if I came out,  
 143 so I stayed there.  
 150 And I remember being really scared about getting into trouble,

## Categorization: Negative

## Participant's emotional response to the event as an adult:

162 Oh, you know, I feel very sad.  
 163 Now I think I was hiding so my mom would find me,  
 163 and . . . she didn't.  
 166 And I feel sad about all that message I took in about being invisible.  
 166 and it makes me sad to think that something that small, in a way, can have  
 such a big effect,

## Categorization: Negative

## Points of interaction between child and parents:

151 I think she yelled and said, you know, "Where were you? Why didn't you  
 come out? You know, we were all worried, and I don't have time for this!"

(table continues)

Table 24 (*continued*)*Dismissing (Insecure) Memory Example, Zen Buddhist, Spotted Dove*

154 And it was conveyed to me that I really shouldn't cause those kinds of problems for her.

Parent's response to the event:

140 and then I heard my mom looking for me,  
 141 and then she asked all the other kids—my brothers and my sisters—where I was,  
 145 and then she was sending people next door and out of the house to look for me,  
 148 And my mother was going to call the police or something,  
 151 I think she yelled and said, you know, "Where were you? Why didn't you come out? You know, we were all worried, and I don't have time for this!"

Child's response to the event:

154 Um . . . and I did learn that I shouldn't cause those kinds of problems for her.

Event label: Negative parent-child interaction

Summary of parental response:

Mother expresses anxiety over child's absence and then becomes angry with child.

Summary of child's response: Child internalizes message to not cause problems.

Attachment rating: Promoting attachment insecurity.

*Note.* Numbering in table refers to the line numbering of sentences in the original transcript.

*Dismissing (insecure), Zen Buddhist, Canyon Wren.* Canyon Wren is a 55-year-old woman who has been practicing Zen Buddhism for 10 years. She has been divorced for 3 years. She grew up with both parents and has two brothers and a sister. As do many individuals classified with a dismissing attachment status, she minimized discussion of her parents in her accounts (Crowell, Fraley, & Shaver, 1999). Most notable in her memories was the description of her relationship with her sister who was close in age:

I always remember this incident because it's so confusing because my sister thinks that it happened to her (laughing), and there's the fact that we were really close growing up, and sometimes it was very confusing about whatever happened to one of us because in some respect what happened to one was happening to the other at

the same time, so there's that confusion.

*Dismissing (insecure), non-Buddhist, Leopard Lily.* Leopard Lily scored in the very high range of relational avoidance on the quantitative measure. As is common for individuals classified as having a dismissing attachment status, Leopard Lily also provided childhood accounts that mostly eliminated discussion of attachment-related experience (Crowell, Fraley, & Shaver, 1999). Nonetheless, narrative analysis is shown for one self-defining memory she provided in Table 25.

Table 25

*Dismissing (Insecure) Memory Example, Non-Buddhist, Leopard Lily*

---

Event: “The Realization of My Own Mortality”  
 144 and I remember I was, I had gone to bed, turned out the light  
 130 and, of course, I didn’t go right to sleep,  
 131 and for some reason or the other, I suddenly realized, not just intellectually,  
 but had an emotional response that I was going to die one day.  
 131 Uh, and I would cease to exist.  
 133 I remember it vividly because it was the first time that it ever really, I ever  
 really truly understood that.  
 148 It was a real shock when it suddenly hit me  
 149 cause I wouldn’t be here to see things going on anymore

Participant’s recollection of event’s emotional content:  
 148 It was a real shock when it suddenly hit me

Categorization: Negative

Participant’s emotional response to the event as an adult:  
 148 I still feel a kind of shock.

Categorization: Positive

Points of interaction between child and parents: None

Parent’s response to the event: None

Child’s response to the event:  
 148 It was a real shock when it suddenly hit me

*(table continues)*

Table 25 (continued)

*Dismissing (Insecure) Memory Example, Non-Buddhist, Leopard Lily*


---

 Event label: Child grasps her mortality.

Summary of parental response: None

Summary of child's response: None

*Attachment rating: Neutral*


---

*Note.* Numbering in table refers to the line numbering of sentences in the original transcript.

*Preoccupied (insecure), Zen Buddhist, Mountain Bluebird.* Mountain Bluebird is an 80-year-old man who has been married for 37 years, with a high degree of marital discord in the last several. He has been practicing Zen Buddhism for 9 years. In all three childhood memories, he depicted situations in which he was injured and frightened, and, although his mother was present during these occurrences, he did not describe her response. Like many individuals with a preoccupied attachment classification, his accounts predominantly focused on the emotion of fear (Hesse, 1999). One self-defining memory is shown in Table 26.

Table 26

*Preoccupied (Insecure) Memory Example, Zen Buddhist, Mountain Bluebird*


---

 Event: "The Tone"  
 111 I was sitting on my mother's lap in an upper room in my grandmother's house,  
 112 and my grandmother had what I guess is still called a dressing dummy,  
 112 which is something vaguely the shape of a woman from the thighs to the  
 shoulders that she used to make dresses with.  
 113 And, uh, um, my brother was also there,  
 114 and this thing fell on me.  
 115 I'm not sure how that happened,  
 115 whether my brother pushed it, my brother, or what.  
 115 All I know is the thing fell on me.  
 131 I mean, it was [horrible] then.  
 121 You know, and, and, I gave [the dressing dummy] a name.  
 122 It was called "The Tone." T-O-N-E.

(table continues)



Table 26 (continued)

*Preoccupied (Insecure) Memory Example, Zen Buddhist, Mountain Bluebird*

---

Participant's recollection of event's emotional content

115 and it was terribly immensely frightening

131 I mean it was [horrible] then.

Categorization: Negative

Participant's emotional response to the event as an adult:

130 Oh, sort of . . . I can touch some of the fear,

130 but it's pretty much dissolved.

130 You know, it's not [horrible] now.

Categorization: Neutral

Points of interaction between child and parents:

111 I was sitting on my mother's lap in an upper room in my grandmother's house.

Parent's response to the event: None reported

Child's response to the event:

115 and it was terribly immensely frightening

131 I mean it was [horrible] then.

121 You know, and, and, I gave [the dressing dummy] a name.

122 It was called "the Tone." T-O-N-E.

Event label: Unintended situational threat to child's physical integrity.

Summary of parental response: None reported

Summary of child's response: Child is frightened by accident.

Attachment rating: Neutral

---

*Note.* Numbering in table refers to the line numbering of sentences in the original transcript.*Preoccupied (insecure), Zen Buddhist, Ivory-billed Woodpecker.* Ivory-billed

Woodpecker is a 59-year-old man who has been practicing meditation for 35 years. He was married for 24 years but is now divorced and involved in a long-term relationship.

His parents separated when he was 11, and he and his younger brothers lived with their mother after that time. His mother threatened to abandon the children after the divorce,

and Ivory-billed Woodpecker was placed in a position of ensuring his younger brothers behaved well so that his mother would not leave them.

Um, it's interesting . . . and sort of the whole many years of being in a position of sort of being responsible for not letting things get out of hand and keeping everything copacetic, keeping my brothers happy so that we wouldn't all go to hell.

*Preoccupied (insecure), non-Buddhist, Ninebark.* Ninebark is a 47-year-old woman who has had one previous marriage, and she has a daughter. Her father was in the Navy, and she and her siblings lived on several military bases growing up. Both of her parents were alcoholics, and they were abusive to each other. Her mother also had a mental disorder and was hospitalized on one occasion for attempted suicide. Her parents divorced when she was 16. Ninebark identifies herself as Christian but does not regularly attend church. As an adult, she has been concerned with romantic relationships and intimacy.

I have a hard time with, I have a hard time with, uh, intimate relationships with men. I don't trust them. I don't trust men, and, um, I probably—it's not so much, I always pick the wrong guys . . . and to this day I'm still not in a relationship with anyone. . . . I guess I am starting to realize that I probably never be with anybody because it's not really real.

Table 27

*Preoccupied (Insecure) Memory Example, Non-Buddhist, Ninebark*

| Event | “The Time Mom Ran Her Fist Through the Back Door”  |
|-------|--|
| 180   | So, this one particular night though,  |
| 180   | all I heard was a crash in at the back door,   |
| 180   | and so I remember getting up to see,   |
| 181   | all of us kinda got up to see what the crash was.  |
| 182   | And what is was was that my mom and dad had been out,  |
| 183   | and my mom had caused a fight because she called some man’s wife a bitch,                      |
| 184   | and this started a whole big brawl of fighting,  |
| 184   | and, um, so evidently my dad had to calm my mom down with this whole thing and bring her home, |

*(table continues)*

Table 27 (continued)

*Preoccupied (Insecure) Memory Example, Non-Buddhist, Ninebark*


---

|     |   |
|-----|---|
| 186 | so they, he got her home,   |
| 187 | but at the same time, he didn't get to the door fast enough to open the door for her,   |
| 188 | so she just decided to ram her fist through the glass window.   |
| 188 | And so when we come down all we're seeing is blood all over the place,  |
| 189 | you know, pieces of skin on the floor from her cutting, her putting her hand through the window,                                  |
| 194 | and so, I just remember again all of us kids not really knowing what to do,   |
| 196 | and the memory kinda ended with seeing blood all over the kitchen floor because it was the back door, all over the kitchen floor, |
| 198 | and I just remember seeing a piece of skin that had been kinda cut off when she hit it  |

Participant's recollection of event's emotional content:

194 and so, I just remember again all of us kids not really knowing what to do,

Categorization: Negative

Participant's emotional response to the event as an adult:

214 and just, you know, even kids love weekends, but our weekends were hell.

Categorization: Negative

Points of interaction between child and parents: None

Parent's response to the event:

188 so she just decided to ram her fist through the glass window.

Child's response to the event:

194 and so, I just remember again all of us kids not really knowing what to do,

Event label: Parental substance abuse

Summary of parental response: Drunken parent puts hand through glass window.

Summary of child's response: Child is frightened and does not know how to respond.

Attachment rating: Promoting attachment insecurity toward mother.

*Note.* Numbering in table refers to the line numbering of sentences in the original transcript.

*Fearful-avoidant (insecure), non-Buddhist, Gilia.* Gilia is a 54-year-old woman who has never been married and does not identify with any religious tradition. Her parents separated when she was 2, and her mother was an alcoholic. She has one sister, and she described their past and present relationship as having many challenges. She feels she has trouble with relationships and intimacy due to events that happened in her childhood:

Um, areas of my life . . . um, my love life, cause I won't settle for men with any type of problem. I am pretty much alone because I won't. I just won't. I don't know—I think cause, I don't know why. I just won't put up with, you know, the drinking and the this and the that and all the different problems men have. And the anger . . . and I think it all has to do with this angry household I grew up in, and I just can't deal with that. And they all seem to have that anger issues, and I can't, I won't, I can't, I don't put up with it, so I don't, so relationships for me don't last because.

Her memory narrative is shown in Table 28.

Table 28

*Fearful-Avoidant (Insecure) Memory Example, Non-Buddhist, Gilia*

---

Event: “Uncontrolled Anger”

114 Okay, I have a memory of my mother and sister fighting, like screaming kind  
of fighting,  
115 and, um, and it made me feel very insecure and very scared and very confused  
115 cause my mother and I didn't have the same relationship that they had.  
115 We had the loving relationship,  
116 and my sister and my mother had the angry, bitter relationship,  
116 but I remember my mother slapping her when we're in the kitchen.  
117 They're fighting,  
117 and my mother slapped her,  
117 and my sister is screaming at her,  
118 and I was like, whoa.

Participant's recollection of event's emotional content:

115 and, um, and it made me feel very insecure and very scared and very confused  
118 and I was like, whoa.

Categorization: Negative

*(table continues)*

Table 28 (continued)

*Fearful-Avoidant (Insecure) Memory Example, Non-Buddhist, Gilia*

Participant's emotional response to the event as an adult

141 I feel it explains a lot about my sister's resentment toward me,  
 141 and it makes me sad.

Categorization: Negative

Points of interaction between child and parents: None

Parent's response to the event:

116 but I remember my mother slapping her when we're in the kitchen.

Child's response to the event:

115 and, um, and it made me feel very insecure and very scared and very confused  
 118 and I was like, whoa,

Event label: Maltreatment in the family

Summary of parental response: Mother physically assaults sibling

Summary of child's response: Child feels afraid by mother's treatment of sister

Attachment rating: Promoting attachment insecurity to mother

*Note.* Numbering in table refers to the line numbering of sentences in the original transcript.

*Fearful-avoidant (insecure), non-Buddhist, Mountain Dogwood.* Mountain

Dogwood is a 48-year-old woman who has been married to her second husband for 23 years. During her childhood, her mother had a mental disorder, and her father struggled with his sexual identity. Both of her parents were strict Jehovah's Witnesses, and she and her siblings were physically abused by their mother. Mountain Dogwood identifies as Christian but does not engage in any formal religious practice.

Um, well, I think just the history of my childhood has made me, um . . . in some ways . . . let's see . . . in some ways stronger, but in other ways more reserved, cause I know there are aspects of my life where, um, I have to sit back and think about it, you know, before I say things, and I am sure that's just because of the way I was raised.

In Table 29, the common types of childhood events reported by interviewees classified as secure and insecure are shown. For Zen Buddhists rated as secure, the most common type of event reported (3, 25%) was positive parent-child interaction. The second most common event reported was positive family outing (2, 16.67%). For Zen Buddhists rated as insecure, the most common type of event reported was negative parent-child interaction (3, 25%). The second most common type of event reported was negative family interaction (2, 16.67%). For non-Buddhists rated as secure, the most common type of event reported was positive family interaction (6, 50%). For non-Buddhists rated as insecure, the most common type of event reported was maltreatment in the family (3, 25%).

Table 29

*Common Types of Story Events*

| Category         | Story event              | Buddhist<br>(N = 8) |       |          |       | Non-Buddhist<br>(N = 8) |       |          |       |
|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-------|----------|-------|-------------------------|-------|----------|-------|
|                  |                          | Secure              |       | Insecure |       | Secure                  |       | Insecure |       |
|                  |                          | N                   | %     | N        | %     | N                       | %     | N        | %     |
| <b>Positive</b>  |                          |                     |       |          |       |                         |       |          |       |
|                  | Parent-child interaction | 3                   | 25.00 | 1        | 8.33  | 1                       | 8.33  | 0        |       |
|                  | Family interaction       | 0                   |       | 0        |       | 6                       | 50.00 | 1        | 8.33  |
|                  | Family outing/trip       | 2                   | 16.67 | 0        |       | 0                       |       | 0        |       |
|                  | Parent homecoming        | 1                   | 8.33  | 0        |       |                         |       | 0        |       |
|                  | Spiritual experience     | 0                   |       | 0        |       | 1                       | 8.33  | 0        |       |
|                  | Total                    | 6                   | 50.00 | 1        | 8.33  | 8                       | 66.67 | 1        | 8.33  |
| <b>Negative</b>  |                          |                     |       |          |       |                         |       |          |       |
|                  | Parent-child interaction | 0                   |       | 3        | 25.00 | 0                       |       | 0        |       |
|                  | Family interaction       | 0                   |       | 2        | 16.67 | 0                       |       | 0        |       |
|                  | Sibling interaction      | 1                   | 8.33  | 0        |       | 0                       |       | 0        |       |
|                  | Threat to physical body  | 1                   | 8.33  | 4        | 33.33 | 0                       |       | 0        |       |
|                  | Emotional abuse          | 2                   | 16.67 | 2        | 16.67 | 1                       | 8.33  | 1        | 8.33  |
|                  | Prolonged Illness        | 0                   |       | 0        |       | 1                       | 8.33  | 0        |       |
|                  | Mental disorder          | 1                   | 8.33  | 0        |       | 0                       |       | 1        | 8.33  |
|                  | Separation               | 0                   |       | 0        |       | 0                       |       | 1        | 8.33  |
|                  | Total                    | 5                   | 41.67 | 11       | 91.67 | 2                       | 16.67 | 3        | 25.00 |
| <b>Traumatic</b> |                          |                     |       |          |       |                         |       |          |       |
|                  | Physical abuse           | 0                   |       | 0        |       | 0                       |       | 1        | 8.33  |
|                  | Substance abuse          | 0                   |       | 0        |       | 1                       | 8.33  | 1        | 8.33  |
|                  | Maltreatment in family   | 1                   | 8.33  | 0        |       | 1                       | 8.33  | 3        | 25.00 |
|                  | Total                    | 1                   | 8.33  | 0        |       | 2                       | 16.67 | 5        |       |
| <b>Neutral</b>   |                          |                     |       |          |       |                         |       |          |       |
|                  | Unrelated to family      | 0                   |       | 1        | 8.33  | 0                       |       | 3        | 25.00 |
|                  | Total                    | 0                   |       | 1        | 8.33  | 0                       |       | 3        | 25.00 |

In Table 30, interviewees' past and present emotional responses to self-defining memories are shown.

Table 30

*Interviewees' Past and Present Responses to Self-Defining Memories*

| Religious affiliation/attachment style | Memory 1 |         | Memory 2 |         | Memory 3 |         |
|--|----------|---------|----------|---------|----------|---------|
| Participant                            | Past     | Present | Past     | Present | Past     | Present |
| <b>Zen Buddhist/secure</b>             |          |         |          |         |          |         |
| Barn Owl                               | -        | =       | +        | +       | TR       | =       |
| Snow Goose                             | +        | +       | -        | +       | -        | =       |
| Sage Grouse                            | -        | =       | +        | +       | TR       | -       |
| American Goldfinch                     | -        | =       | +        | +       | +        | +       |
| <b>Zen Buddhist/dismissing</b>         |          |         |          |         |          |         |
| Spotted Dove                           | -        | -       | +        | +       | -        | -       |
| Canyon Wren                            | -        | =       | -        | +       | +        | -       |
| <b>Zen Buddhist/preoccupied</b>        |          |         |          |         |          |         |
| Ivory-billed Woodpecker                | -        | -       | -        | =       | -        | =       |
| Mountain Bluebird                      | -        | =       | -        | =       | -        | =       |
| <b>Non-Buddhist/secure</b>             |          |         |          |         |          |         |
| Alpine Lily                            | -        | +       | +        | +       | +        | +       |
| Beach Strawberry                       | -        | =       | +        | +       | -        | -       |
| Seaside Daisy                          | +        | +       | TR       | -       | +        | +       |
| California Poppy                       | -        | +       | -        | +       | -        | +       |
| <b>Non-Buddhist/dismissing</b>         |          |         |          |         |          |         |
| Leopard Lily                           | -        | -       | -        | -       | +        | -       |
| <b>Non-Buddhist/fearful-avoidant</b>   |          |         |          |         |          |         |
| Mountain Dogwood                       | -        | -       | -        | +       | +        | +       |
| Gilia                                  | -        | -       | -        | -       | -        | -       |
| <b>Non-Buddhist/preoccupied</b>        |          |         |          |         |          |         |
| Ninebark                               | TR       | +       | TR       | -       | -        | -       |

Note. TR = Traumatic, - Negative, = Neutral, + Positive.



For Zen Buddhists and non-Buddhists rated as secure, 5 (41.67%) of the 12 total memories reported were positive recollections. For both Buddhist and non-Buddhists rated as insecure, 10 (83.33%) of the 12 total memories reported were negative and/or traumatic recollections. For Buddhists rated as insecure, 7 (58.33%) of the recollections were accompanied by some degree of emotional resolution in the present. For non-Buddhists rated as insecure, 4 (25%) of the memories recalled were accompanied by a sense of emotional resolution in the present. Participants who did not identify with any religious framework reported the highest number of negative memories and felt the least amount of emotional resolution in the present with regard to those memories. Results are shown in Table 31.

Table 31

*Frequency of Positive, Negative/Traumatic, and Neutral Memories*

| Rel aff | Attach style   | +        |       | TR/-     |        | =        |   | Resolution |       |
|---------|----------------|----------|-------|----------|--------|----------|---|------------|-------|
|         |                | <i>N</i> | %     | <i>N</i> | %      | <i>N</i> | % | <i>N</i>   | %     |
| ZB      |                |          |       |          |        |          |   |            |       |
|         | S              | 5        | 41.67 | 7        | 58.33  | 0        |   | 7          | 58.33 |
|         | D              | 2        | 33.33 | 4        | 66.67  | 0        |   | 2          | 33.33 |
|         | FA             | —        |       | —        |        | —        |   | —          |       |
|         | P              | 0        |       | 6        | 100.00 | 0        |   | 5          | 83.33 |
|         | Insecure Total | 2        | 16.67 | 10       | 83.33  | 0        |   | 7          | 58.33 |
|         | All Total      | 7        | 29.16 | 17       | 70.83  | 0        |   | 14         | 58.33 |
| NB      |                |          |       |          |        |          |   |            |       |
|         | S              | 5        | 41.67 | 7        | 58.33  | 0        |   | 6          | 50.00 |
|         | D              | 1        | 33.33 | 2        | 66.67  | 0        |   | 0          |       |
|         | FA             | 1        | 16.67 | 5        | 83.33  | 0        |   | 1          | 16.67 |
|         | P              | 0        |       | 3        | 100.00 | 0        |   | 2          | 66.67 |
|         | Insecure Total | 2        | 16.67 | 10       | 83.33  | 0        |   | 3          | 25.00 |
|         | All Total      | 7        | 29.16 | 17       | 70.83  | 0        |   | 9          | 37.50 |

*Note.* Dashes indicate data could not be obtained because none of the Zen Buddhist interviewees scored as fearful-avoidant on the *ECR-R*. TR Traumatic, - Negative, = Neutral, + Positive, S = Secure, P = Preoccupied, D = Dismissing, FA = Fearful-avoidant, ZB = Zen Buddhist, NB = Non-Buddhist, Rel aff = Religious affiliation, Attach style = Attachment style.

*Holistic-Form Analysis*

What types of interpretive frameworks are used by Zen Buddhist and non-Buddhist interviewees when describing childhood attachment-related memories and adult spiritual or personal transformative processes, and how are these frameworks influenced by interviewees' spiritual and/or religious belief systems? This question was addressed using holistic-form analysis. A holistic-form reading of stories follows methods borrowed from the field of literary criticism and focuses upon the structure, plot, tone, and progression of the narrative, rather than exclusively on specific content (Jantzen, 2008; Lieblich et al., 1998). In the narrative genre, the four primary plot categories include romance, comedy, tragedy, and satire.

In the "romance", a hero faces a series of challenges en route to his goal and eventual victory, and the essence of the journey is the struggle itself. The goal of the "comedy" is the restoration of social order, and the hero must have the requisite social skills to overcome the hazard that threatens that order. In "tragedy," the hero is defeated by the forces of evil and ostracized from society. Finally, the "satire" provides a cynical perspective on social hegemony. (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 88)

In addition to determining the typology of plots, the development of the narrative is also considered in holistic-form analysis. For example, in a narrative of progression, difficult life events are surmounted as the story proceeds, and advancement occurs over time. In a narrative of regression, a course of descent ensues; stagnation, loss, and confusion become overriding considerations. In a stable narrative, a steady foundation prevails through the various ups and downs of life (Lieblich et al., 1998).

Lieblich et al. (1998) suggest that the first step of holistic-form analysis involves determining how the content creates the overall structure of the plot through its trajectory and focus. From there, "the second phase of analysis is to identify the dynamics of the

plot, which may be inferred from particular forms of speech” (p. 91).

Of 8 Zen Buddhist interviewees, 7 tellers constructed progressive romantic plots, and 1 offered a regressive tragic story. Of 8 non-Buddhist interviewees, 4 offered narratives of a romantic genre. Of the remaining 4 non-Buddhist participants who did not actively engage in spiritual or religious practices, 1 offered a comedy, and 1 provided a satirical anecdote. The two remaining accounts followed a tragic course. Results are shown in Table 32.

Table 32

*Plot Types and Narrative Development for All Interviewees*

| Zen Buddhist            |      |       | Non-Buddhist     |      |       |
|-------------------------|------|-------|------------------|------|-------|
| Interviewee             | Plot | Nr dv | Interviewee      | Plot | Nr dv |
| <u>Attachment style</u> |      |       |                  |      |       |
| Secure                  |      |       |                  |      |       |
| Barn Owl                | Ro   | Pro   | Alpine Lily      | Ro   | Stb   |
| Snow Goose              | Ro   | Pro   | Beach Strawberry | Com  | Pro   |
| Sage Grouse             | Ro   | Pro   | Seaside Daisy    | Ro   | Pro   |
| American Goldfinch      | Ro   | Stb   | California Poppy | Ro   | Stb   |
| Dismissing              |      |       |                  |      |       |
| Spotted Dove            | Ro   | Pro   | Leopard Lily     | Sat  | Stb   |
| Canyon Wren             | Ro   | Pro   | —                | —    | —     |
| Fearful-avoidant        |      |       |                  |      |       |
| —                       | —    | —     | Mountain Dogwood | Trg  | Pro   |
| —                       | —    | —     | Gilia            | Trg  | Stb   |
| Preoccupied             |      |       |                  |      |       |
| Ivory-Billed Woodpecker | Ro   | Pro   | Ninebark         | Ro   | Pro   |
| Mountain Bluebird       | Trg  | Reg   | —                | —    | —     |

*Note.* Dashes indicated data could not be obtained because there was not an interviewee classified with

that attachment style based on *ECR-R* scores. Nr dv = Narrative development, Ro = Romance, Trg =

Tragedy, Com = Comedy, Sat = Satire, Stb = Stable, Pro = Progressive, Reg = Regressive.

The material from respondents in the following section is presented as follows:

Holistic-form analysis for 2 participants, 1 Zen Buddhist and 1 non-Buddhist with secure

attachment styles, respectively, is represented first. Holistic-form analysis for 2 participants, 1 Zen Buddhist and 1 non-Buddhist, is also presented for those classified as preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful-avoidant (insecure), respectively. For the classification of fearful-avoidant, only 1 non-Buddhist participant is depicted, for none of the Zen Buddhist interviewees were classified as fearful-avoidant. Each plot category (romance, tragedy, satire, and comedy) and form of narrative development (progressive, stable, and regressive) is represented.

*Secure, Zen Buddhist, romance, progressive, Snow Goose.* Snow Goose grew up in a home where she felt loved, cherished, and deeply emotionally supported by her parents. Nonetheless, her family also faced many challenges, for her mother and two siblings had bipolar illness. At times, her mother had to spend time away from the family in a psychiatric facility, and she then succumbed to cancer at a relatively young age. Nonetheless, Snow Goose expressed gratitude when reflecting on these difficulties. She described a strong spiritual experience that occurred during a Zen meditation retreat:

Actually, in some ways, it almost made me feel as though the more difficulties the better, you know? I don't know how quite to explain that, but it made me realize that, um, you know, going along through life and never having difficulties is not necessarily helpful in terms of understanding.

Snow Goose relayed that she had through the practice of Zen come to value deeply life's struggles, and she greeted adversity with a welcoming stance.

*Secure, non-Buddhist, comedy, progressive, Beach Strawberry.* Beach Strawberry was raised amidst a high degree of family conflict, and her alcoholic father was rarely home. Nonetheless, she presented a comical narrative in which she mustered the necessary skills to overcome early challenges and establish a happy, stable marriage with

a supportive, kind partner. She explained, “I’ve developed a different kind of dark sense of humor about the whole thing . . . and I like to call myself a triumph over genetics and environment.” She repeatedly resolved the tension of her difficulties by emphasizing the ironic and humorous elements of family disputes, and she was able in her adulthood emotionally to divest from petty disagreements and reflect on them comically:

I mean, it took me awhile to try and untangle the knots in this bizarre family. It would take the Nuremberg jury to figure out what was going on in this crowd, but, um, in the end, I’m just, I’m—I’m relieved I think that I did it . . . and it made a huge change in my life.

*Dismissing (insecure), Zen Buddhist, romance, progressive, Spotted Dove.*

Spotted Dove related childhood memories involving troubling interactions with her family that she felt set the framework for issues she has struggled with throughout her adult life. She made reference to the sadness and regret she felt about her inability to give voice to feelings of fear and shame throughout her childhood and the various painful misunderstandings that ensued between her and her mother due to lack of clear communication.

I feel, I feel sad, you know, that I suffered through that, and I never told anybody, and that I never talked to my mother about, and she never talked to me about it. It just became a check mark in the regret column.

Although Spotted Dove struggled with feelings of invisibility and often had trouble finding her voice as an adult, she simultaneously indicated that Zen Buddhist practice continually provided her with opportunities to face directly the limiting beliefs adopted in childhood. Her story reflected a process in which Zen practice drew her beyond confining early patterns into a more authentic realm of being:

And in a way, it may be particular to Zen practice. It requires a certain kind of visibility, but that presses against all of my self-definitions and fears. . . . and this

has helped me see that my self-definition is sort of irrelevant and that what arises without my self-definition has more truth to it.

*Dismissing (insecure), non-Buddhist, satire, stable, Leopard Lily.* Although

Leopard Lily did not provide accounts of parental interactions in her narratives, she did offer a satirical plot in which she continued to expose injustices with the intention of bringing about social improvement. In one account, Leopard Lily recalled an instance in childhood in which the minister at her church explained that she was too young to join the church, and this discrimination led her to stage a lifelong rejection of organized religion. In a second self-defining memory, she described an event in which a teacher made fun of a shy, vulnerable student, and Leopard Lily replied to the teacher's insult with a cutting, witty remark:

We had an English teacher who was one of those sarcastic, you know, people with students, and, I don't know, she said something cutting one day to this girl, and it really made me mad, and so I just smarted back off at her.

Leopard Lily's narrative represented a satirical anecdote in which the heroine used her intelligence and wit to protest against the established order in effort to uphold specific values and constructively improve the prevailing social condition.

*Fearful-avoidant (insecure), non-Buddhist, tragedy, progressive, Mountain*

*Dogwood.* Mountain Dogwood was raised by parents who were strict Jehovah's Witness, and, for much of her childhood, traditional holidays were not celebrated. Mountain Dogwood and her four siblings were permitted to have neither dates nor friendships with anyone who did not share the same religious faith. Mountain Dogwood's mother also had a mental disorder and displayed erratic and volatile mood swings during which she smashed the children's possessions, chased them down the street, and physically and



emotionally abused them. Mountain Dogwood's father struggled with his sexual identity, and her parents divorced when Mountain Dogwood was 17. Although Mountain Dogwood's tale illustrated progression and success in that she felt proud that she had raised her own children in a manner different from that in which she had been raised; she also noted that she continued to grapple with maladaptive relational patterns resulting from her childhood:

Well, it's because—the way I was raised, I was so guarded, it's hard for me emotionally, um, to tell people how I feel about them, you know, uh, and it could be because, you know, I am afraid I might get rejection, or they might tell me something that they don't like about me, and I've already opened up to tell them something, and so that has made me quite guarded, you know, even with my husband. We've been married, you know, 25 years, and it's just, it's still hard for me.

As Mountain Dogwood had experienced religious beliefs as a form of abuse and restriction, she also found connecting with formal religious practices challenging as an adult. When asked if she was involved with any spiritual or religious traditions in her adult life, Mountain Dogwood responded, “I had enough church from my parents for my entire life.” In this sense, Mountain Dogwood's narrative reflects a tragic plot in that the protagonist found herself conflicted with regard to religion and isolated from those she loved most through confining patterns of relating arising from childhood.

*Preoccupied (insecure), Zen Buddhist, romance, progressive, Ivory-billed Woodpecker.* Ivory-billed Woodpecker's overwhelmed mother asked that he assume responsibility for the care of his younger brothers after his parents' divorce, and she threatened to send them to an orphanage if he failed. He described feeling the need to remain “on guard” for the slightest mishap throughout his upbringing to prevent being completely abandoned. As an adult, he noticed he often felt challenged by patterns arising

from this conditioning. For example, he explained he frequently felt the need to perform every task perfectly and to ensure that others did the same, and he recognized that this behavior stemmed from a difficult position as caretaker during his childhood. He also expressed that Zen Buddhist practice had enabled him to reflect on and understand his actions and compassionately to witness troubling patterns of relating. He felt that the process of recalling and piecing past events together over the course of 35 years of meditation practice was a fruitful and gratifying task:

Well, it's clear that those are the foundational conditionings of my life, and I can see that it is all still trucking along pretty good, although being able to watch it [during meditation practice] gives me the leeway to make more informed choices. It's helped me make sense of my life. It's really cool to remember those things and put them together.

Hence, Ivory-billed Woodpecker offered a tale in which meditation practice allowed for increased flexibility in decision-making processes and in which he was able meaningfully to appreciate the difficult events of the past and their influence on the present.

*Preoccupied (insecure), non-Buddhist, romance, progressive, Ninebark.*

Ninebark's mother suffered from a mental disorder, and she was also an alcoholic prone to violent fits of rage. After attempting suicide when Ninebark was an adolescent, she spent several months in mental institutions. Ninebark's father was in the military, and he was also an alcoholic. He was often absent for long periods of time when Ninebark and her siblings were young, and the family moved frequently. When her father was present, her parents engaged in screaming matches and instances of domestic violence. On one occasion, her mother tried to stab her father with a pair of scissors as Ninebark and her siblings watched helplessly. During another heated argument, Ninebark's drunken mother

rammed her hand through a glass window and cut herself badly, and Ninebark distinctly recalled feeling “like this is a dream” as she watched her mother's blood spill over the kitchen floor.

Although Ninebark experienced an exceptionally high degree of trauma as a child, she also underwent a series of strong spiritual experiences that helped her to frame the difficult struggles of her life in a hopeful manner. Rather than portraying identification with a victim stance, her narrative chronicled a path in which her spirituality granted her fortitude and resilience. She discovered that, in turning to her relationship with Christ, she was able to feel gratitude for the challenges presented to her:

He [the spirit of Christ] was right there next to me even though I couldn't see Him. He, He was there . . . and I started laughing with Him because I was like, you know, you're right. I feel blessed. I feel blessed that you haven't made my life easy because I look at what He did with these other people [in the Bible], and He hasn't made it easy for them, and I shouldn't expect it to be easy. This life here isn't about being easy. It's about doing God's will and being what God wants us to be.

Even as a young child, Ninebark described an instance in which she felt soothed by the presence of the divine, and these occurrences shifted the tone of her narrative toward one of hope and comfort rather than one of defeat and despair.

I just go outside in my bare feet with the snow on the ground and just get on my hands and knees and just pray to God . . . that my mom didn't kill my dad, so I think that is why I am a spiritual person because it just happened to be that, that kind of silent moment out there looking up at the sky, I just felt a kind of comfort over me—that I knew He was there, and He was going to take care of things.

The procedure of locating core story segments that symbolized key turning points in the overall plot development revealed that 7 of 8 Buddhist interviewees provided romantic narratives. One offered a regressive tragic story. Most described varying degrees of difficulty during childhood that ranged from challenging and stressful interactions with

parents and siblings to instances of severe emotional and physical abuse. In this sense, the self as hero was provided with a series of obstacles that he or she later worked to understand and resolve, and the primary focus was often on the nature of the struggles themselves (Lieblich et al., 1998). Additionally, in six of the seven romances, the development of the narrative was progressive in that the story was one of continued growth and advancement.

For most Zen Buddhist participants, a plot that involved the transition from the self as the victim of childhood circumstance to a story of agency, resilience, triumph, and forgiveness could be traced in their narrative. Although the degree of change varied from person to person, all but 1 of the Zen Buddhist interviewee participants provided narratives that reflected a course of emotional evolution toward increased insight and contentment. Furthermore, 6 of the participants cited Zen Buddhist practice as the prevailing process powering the movement toward greater resolution and acceptance. Zen Buddhist practice was frequently cited as the principal instrument generating meaningful confrontation with unresolved childhood patterns that resulted in the acquisition of increased emotional flexibility, personal understanding, and integration of experience. Hence, Zen Buddhism had a powerful influence on Zen Buddhist interviewees' interpretative frameworks of childhood experience, and the ability to confront painful past events and make more informed choices in the present was widely attributed to the practice of Zen.

Of 8 non-Buddhist participants, 2 ordered the events of their childhoods and adult lives in the form of progressive romantic narratives. In these stories, the plot was permeated by representations of hope and perseverance, and the heroines did not succumb

to despair or self-pity, despite facing overwhelming hardship. Two other non-Buddhist participants provided stable romances that followed a structurally similar course in that these tellers shared accounts in which their childhood homes were supportive and safe. At this life stage, these 2 participants did not grapple with abuse or monumental events that exceeded their coping capacities, so the accomplishments of their romantic accounts rested on a steady foundation of love and support.

In a manner strikingly similar to that of Zen Buddhist participants, the 4 non-Buddhists who framed their narratives as romantic journeys cited specific spiritual and religious belief structures as the crucial element that allowed the self as hero to face and overcome life's obstacles. In these narratives, the movement toward success was made possible through faith in God, and the thematic foci of the journeys were the challenges met along the way. Each of these participants outlined themes of personal progress and achievement that pivoted on guidance and comfort obtained from a close, loving, and redemptive relationship with the divine.

Of 4 non-Buddhist participants who did not engage in formal religious practice and/or identify with any religious framework, 1 offered a comical plot, and 1 offered a satirical plot. The remaining 2 depicted accounts that outlined a tragic course in that both participants expressed a sense of confusion with regard to the past and a profound sense of alienation in the present. Hence, participants who did not identify with any religious framework were more likely to offer plots that focused on loss and isolation and were lacking in evidence of advancement toward emotional freedom from past events.

*Categorical-Content Analysis II*

The coding system set forth in McAdams (2001) and McAdams et al. (1996), based on the work of personality psychologist David Bakan (1966), was “designed to detect the salience of agency and communion themes in accounts of discrete life-story episodes” (McAdams, 2001, p. 1). It was used in this present research analysis in order to assess the degree to which Zen Buddhists and non-Buddhists expressed themes relating to the predominant Western ideal of self-contained individualism in autobiographical narratives. Although this coding system was not developed with the specific intent of measuring the degree to which the social constructs of individualism and collectivism are expressed in individual narrative episodes, it is a highly relevant tool in this research endeavor, for the thematic groupings of agency are closely linked with the central values of individualism, and themes of communion strongly resonate with collectivist ideals.

The necessary focus on the self, therefore, encourages a rhetoric of agency in most autobiographical accounts, especially among contemporary citizens of Western societies, imbued with an ethic of individualism. For example, many turning point episodes will tell how a person has moved from dependence to “autonomy.” (p. 2)

Agency consists of a broad array of conceptions that include “strength, power, expansion, mastery, control, dominance, achievement, autonomy, separation, and independence” (McAdams et al., 1996, p. 346). McAdams et al. point out that, in most autobiographical accounts, the participant is specifically instructed to recall significant events pertaining to the self. Therefore, self-focused expressions that emphasize the positive aspects of the individual should be anticipated in such narratives. Nonetheless, McAdams et al. maintain that their coding system captures four dimensions of agency that exceed the individualistic expression that would normally be expected within the

autobiographical narratives of Westerners. These include (a) self-mastery, (b) status/victory, (c) achievement/responsibility, and (d) empowerment.

Self-mastery (SM) encompasses actions, insights, or occurrences that serve to empower the self and to allow the protagonist to become a more effective agent in the world. Examples include instances of profound personal insight that create opportunities for the attainment of new ambitions or confer an increased sense of mastery over one's future. Other expressions include instances in which the self feels psychologically, emotionally, or physically stronger or more powerful during or following a significant occasion (McAdams, 2001).

Status/victory (SV) refers to events in which the self earns stature and recognition through winning a competition, and “the implication in SV is that status or victory is achieved vis-a-vis others” (McAdams, 2001, p. 4). The recognition received is meaningful and is obtained through success following a competition of some form.

McAdams (2001) defines achievement/responsibility (AR) as the successful accomplishment of goals or projects that results for the protagonist in heightened feelings of pride, self-assurance, and confidence. These goals are generally met within academic or work settings and may require that the protagonist take charge of substantial responsibilities in striving toward excellence.

Empowerment (EM) encompasses events in which “the subject is enlarged, enhanced, empowered, ennobled, built up, or made better through his or her association with someone or *something larger and more powerful than the self*” (McAdams, 2001, p. 7). The source of empowerment may be a spiritual teacher, religious figure, teacher or mentor, parent, grandparent, or mental health worker who provides counsel or support at

a critical time. God, nature, the cosmos, or some other divine manifestation or supernatural source may also serve as the center of power. In essence, the consequence of contact with the more powerful source is an amplification of the agency of the self (McAdams, 2001).

Communion involves mutual sharing, affection, love, harmony, intimacy, and merger between individuals (McAdams et al., 1996; McAdams, 2001). In essence, it involves nurturing and supportive contact or relating between one or more persons. “The four communion categories below represent a distillation and sharpening of the ten categories employed by McAdams in the TAT coding system for intimacy motivation” (McAdams, p. 8). The four categories of communion include (a) love/friendship, (b) dialogue, (c) caring/help, and (d) unity/togetherness.

Love/friendship (LF) involves experiences that revolve around the development or deepening of romantic or platonic love between individuals of approximately equivalent age and status. It does not include relationships between parents and children, but it does include relationships that have grown apart or terminated for a case in which the teller describes a previous experience of loving another at a time in the past.

Dialogue (DG) refers to mutual communication between individuals or groups of persons that promotes connection, deeper intimacy, and enhanced understanding. Giving advice or helping another through active discussion such as those employed in therapeutic treatment also scores for DG. Conversations that occur as a means to an end, such as job interviews or work-related meetings, or heated exchanges arising from misunderstanding or aggressive confrontations that promote antagonism are not included in this category (McAdams, 2001).



In events coded as caring/help (CH), the protagonist offers “care, assistance, nurturance, help, aid, support, or therapy for another, providing for the physical, material, social, or emotional welfare or well-being of another. Examples of *being helped* (being cared for, being the object of nurturance) do *not* score for CH” (McAdams, 2001, p. 10). Many accounts of caring for or adopting children are included as caring, and the assistance given must reflect an act of concern for another’s welfare. For example, monetary support for family members or charitable causes provided out of sense of compassion and nurturance scores as CH. Feelings of compassion toward others, even if they are not acted on, are also coded as CH.

Unity/togetherness (UT) illustrates the notion of feeling profound affinity with family, friends, social groups, collective communities, or entire nations of individuals, often during shared cultural events or social rituals. Although McAdams (2001) and McAdams et al. (1996) define this theme as a sense of camaraderie, solidarity, and harmony with other people, or even all of humankind, this definition was broadened in order to suit the needs of this research project. Experiences in which the protagonist described the dissolution of normative modes of perception so that elements previously viewed as separate “came together in an all-inclusive way” (Wade, 1996, p. 205) were also coded as UT. Experiences in which the self was recognized as fundamentally “empty” and/or in which a non-dualistic interdependent sense of oneness with all creation prevailed were scored as UT, as well. It is important to note that, although these events might include an understanding of the presence of a larger force, as found in the theme of empowerment (EM), the distinguishing factor is that the experience in question does not result in the enlargement or enhancement of one’s sense of self-agency. By contrast, if

anything, one's concern for private attainment or self-enhancement diminishes and is replaced with selfless, altruistic motives.

Two methods of scoring were used for this project. The first system utilized was the system outlined by McAdams (2001) and McAdams et al. (1996), in which the researcher determined "the presence (score +1) or absence (score 0) of each of the eight themes" (McAdams et al., 1996, p. 353) in each participant's account.

A total agency score for a particular memory is the sum of the four agency themes in that memory, ranging hypothetically from a minimum of 0 (no agency themes present in that memory) to a maximum score of 4 (in the case of a memory's containing self-mastery, status, achievement/responsibility, and empowerment). (p. 353)

A total communion score was, in this first system, achieved in the same manner and also ranged, hypothetically, from 0 to 4.

The second method of scoring used recorded the frequency with which any theme appeared in a single narrative. Each time a theme appeared, it received a score of 1.

To allow this researcher to determine how often participants in each group articulated themes of agency and communion, narrative accounts were subject to categorical-content narrative analysis. In this study, the entire interview, including responses to both the *Self-Defining Memory Questionnaire* and the *Researcher-Developed Questionnaire*, was considered a single narrative, and themes were coded across an entire account rather than in each individual memory episode.

The first method of scoring showed that secure Zen Buddhists articulated themes of agency almost twice as often as did secure non-Buddhists. Conversely, secure non-Buddhists portrayed themes of communion nearly twice as did secure Zen Buddhists. For agency, themes of empowerment appeared an equal number of times between secure Zen

Buddhists and non-Buddhists. All secure Zen Buddhists and 1 secure non-Buddhist participant referred to an instance subsequently coded as self-mastery, and the narratives of all insecure Zen Buddhists and non-Buddhists depicted themes of self-mastery. For communion, all secure non-Buddhists referenced themes of caring/helping. Secure Zen Buddhists did not articulate themes of caring/helping. Insecure Zen Buddhists portrayed themes of unity/togetherness three times as often as did insecure non-Buddhists. Results are shown in Table 33.

Table 33

*Frequency of Themes of Agency and Communion in Interviewees' Narratives I*

| Rel affiliation/att style<br>Participant | Agency |    |    |    |   | Communion |    |    |    |   |
|--|--------|----|----|----|---|-----------|----|----|----|---|
|  | SM     | SV | AR | EM | T | LF        | DG | CH | UT | T |
| <i>Zen Buddhist/secure</i>               |        |    |    |    |   |           |    |    |    |   |
| Barn Owl                                 | 1      | 0  | 0  | 1  | 2 | 0         | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1 |
| Snow Goose                               | 1      | 0  | 0  | 1  | 2 | 0         | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1 |
| Sage Grouse                              | 1      | 0  | 0  | 1  | 2 | 0         | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1 |
| American Goldfinch                       | 1      | 1  | 1  | 1  | 4 | 0         | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1 |
| <i>Zen Buddhist/dismissing</i>           |        |    |    |    |   |           |    |    |    |   |
| Spotted Dove                             | 1      | 0  | 1  | 1  | 3 | 0         | 0  | 1  | 1  | 2 |
| Canyon Wren                              | 1      | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1 | 1         | 0  | 0  | 1  | 2 |
| <i>Zen-Buddhist/preoccupied</i>          |        |    |    |    |   |           |    |    |    |   |
| Ivory-billed Woodpecker                  | 1      | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1 | 0         | 0  | 1  | 1  | 2 |
| Mountain Bluebird                        | 1      | 0  | 0  | 1  | 2 | 0         | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1 |
| <i>Non-Buddhist/secure</i>               |        |    |    |    |   |           |    |    |    |   |
| Alpine Lily                              | 0      | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1 | 1         | 0  | 1  | 1  | 3 |
| Beach Strawberry                         | 1      | 0  | 0  | 1  | 2 | 1         | 0  | 1  | 1  | 3 |
| Seaside Daisy                            | 0      | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1 | 0         | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1 |
| California Poppy                         | 0      | 0  | 1  | 1  | 2 | 0         | 0  | 1  | 1  | 2 |
| <i>Non-Buddhist/dismissing</i>           |        |    |    |    |   |           |    |    |    |   |
| Leopard Lily                             | 1      | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1 | 0         | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1 |
| <i>Non-Buddhist/fearful-avoidant</i>     |        |    |    |    |   |           |    |    |    |   |
| Mountain Dogwood                         | 1      | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1 | 0         | 1  | 1  | 1  | 3 |
| Gilia                                    | 1      | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1 | 0         | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1 |
| <i>Non-Buddhist/preoccupied</i>          |        |    |    |    |   |           |    |    |    |   |
| Ninebark                                 | 1      | 0  | 0  | 1  | 2 | 0         | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0 |

*Note.* Rel affiliation = religious affiliation, att style = attachment style, T = Total.

For all Zen Buddhist interviewees, 17 (53.13%) of 32 total accounts contained themes of agency. For non-Buddhist interviewees, 11 (34.38%) of 32 total accounts contained themes of agency. Approximately twice as many secure and insecure Zen Buddhists reported themes of agency secure and insecure as did non-Buddhists. Themes of communion occurred in 11 (34.38%) of 32 total accounts by all Zen Buddhist participants and in 14 (43.75%) of 32 total accounts by all non-Buddhists. Secure non-Buddhists articulated themes of communion twice as often as did secure Zen Buddhists. Themes of communion were roughly equal between insecure participants in both groups—Zen Buddhists and non-Buddhists. Insecure Zen Buddhists reported an equal number of themes of both agency and communion. Results are shown in Table 34.

Table 34

*Totals and Percentages of Themes of Agency and Communion*

| Rel aff   | Attach style | Agency    |       |    |      |    |       |    |       |       |       |
|-----------|--------------|-----------|-------|----|------|----|-------|----|-------|-------|-------|
|           |              | SM        |       | SV |      | AR |       | EM |       | Total |       |
|           |              | N         | %     | N  | %    | N  | %     | N  | %     | N     | %     |
| <b>ZB</b> |              |           |       |    |      |    |       |    |       |       |       |
|           | S            | 4         | 100.0 | 1  | 25.0 | 1  | 25.0  | 4  | 100.0 | 10    | 62.50 |
|           | D            | 2         | 100.0 | 0  |      | 1  | 50.0  | 1  | 50.0  | 4     | 50.00 |
|           | FA           | —         |       | —  |      | —  |       | —  |       | —     |       |
|           | P            | 2         | 100.0 | 0  |      | 0  |       | 1  | 50.0  | 3     | 37.50 |
|           | Ins total    | 4         | 100.0 | 0  |      | 1  | 25.0  | 2  | 50.0  | 7     | 43.75 |
|           | All total    | 8         | 100.0 | 1  | 12.5 | 2  | 25.0  | 6  | 75.0  | 17    | 53.13 |
| <b>NB</b> |              |           |       |    |      |    |       |    |       |       |       |
|           | S            | 1         | 25.0  | 0  |      | 1  | 25.0  | 4  | 100.0 | 6     | 37.50 |
|           | D            | 1         | 100.0 | 0  |      | 0  |       | 0  |       | 1     | 25.00 |
|           | FA           | 2         | 100.0 | 0  |      | 0  |       | 0  |       | 2     | 25.00 |
|           | P            | 1         | 100.0 | 0  |      | 0  |       | 1  | 100.0 | 2     | 50.00 |
|           | Ins total    | 4         | 100.0 | 0  |      | 0  |       | 1  | 25.0  | 4     | 25.00 |
|           | All total    | 5         | 62.5  | 0  |      | 1  | 12.5  | 5  | 62.5  | 11    | 34.38 |
| Rel aff   | Attach style | Communion |       |    |      |    |       |    |       |       |       |
|           |              | LF        |       | DG |      | CH |       | UT |       | Total |       |
|           |              | N         | %     | N  | %    | N  | %     | N  | %     | N     | %     |
| <b>ZB</b> |              |           |       |    |      |    |       |    |       |       |       |
|           | S            | 0         |       | 0  |      | 0  |       | 4  | 100.0 | 4     | 25.00 |
|           | D            | 1         | 50.0  | 0  |      | 1  | 50.0  | 2  | 100.0 | 4     | 50.00 |
|           | FA           | —         |       | —  |      | —  |       | —  |       | —     |       |
|           | P            | 0         |       | 0  |      | 1  | 50.0  | 2  | 100.0 | 3     | 37.50 |
|           | Ins total    | 1         | 25.0  | 0  |      | 2  | 50.0  | 4  | 100.0 | 7     | 43.75 |
|           | All total    | 1         | 12.5  | 0  |      | 2  | 25.0  | 8  | 100.0 | 11    | 34.38 |
| <b>NB</b> |              |           |       |    |      |    |       |    |       |       |       |
|           | S            | 2         | 50.0  | 0  |      | 4  | 100.0 | 3  | 75.0  | 9     | 56.25 |
|           | D            | 0         |       | 0  |      | 1  | 100.0 | 0  |       | 1     | 25.00 |
|           | FA           | 0         |       | 1  | 50.0 | 2  | 100.0 | 1  | 50.0  | 4     | 50.00 |
|           | P            | 0         |       | 0  |      | 0  |       | 0  |       | 0     |       |
|           | Ins total    | 0         |       | 1  | 25.0 | 3  | 75.0  | 1  | 25.0  | 5     | 31.25 |
|           | All total    | 2         | 25.0  | 1  | 12.5 | 7  | 87.5  | 4  | 50.0  | 14    | 43.75 |

*Note.* Dashes indicate data could not be obtained because none of the Zen Buddhist interviewees scored as fearful-avoidant on the *ECR-R*. S = Secure, P = Preoccupied, D = Dismissing, FA = Fearful-avoidant, Rel aff = Religious affiliation, ZB = Zen Buddhist, NB = Non-Buddhist, Ins total = Insecure total, Attach style = Attachment style.

The second method of scoring used was to record the frequency of times any theme appeared in a single narrative. Each time a theme appeared, it received a score of 1. This was done in order to bring further clarification to the frequency with which certain themes appeared between groups. Results reveal that approximately twice as many Zen Buddhists reported themes of self-mastery when compared with non-Buddhists in that respects, whereas themes of communion were reported in equal amount between groups.

Zen Buddhists reported themes of unity/togetherness more often than non-Buddhists. Zen Buddhists, however, tended to report experiences of unity/togetherness in which the self was recognized as fundamentally “empty” and/or a non-dualistic interdependent sense of oneness prevailed, while non-Buddhists most often reported unity/togetherness events involving experiences of harmony and solidarity with family members.

In order to test further the differences between Zen Buddhist and non-Buddhists, data was examined using one-way ANOVA. There was a statistically significant difference between groups in regard to only one variable—caring/helping. Non-Buddhists reported themes of caring/helping at a statistically significant higher rate. Results are shown in Table 35.

Table 35

*Frequency of Themes of Agency and Communion in Interviewees' Narratives II*

| Rel affiliation/att style            | Agency |    |    |    |   | Communion |    |    |    |   |
|--------------------------------------|--------|----|----|----|---|-----------|----|----|----|---|
|                                      | SM     | SV | AR | EM | T | LF        | DG | CH | UT | T |
| <b>Participant</b>                   |        |    |    |    |   |           |    |    |    |   |
| <b>Zen Buddhist/secure</b>           |        |    |    |    |   |           |    |    |    |   |
| Barn Owl                             | 3      | 0  | 0  | 1  | 4 | 0         | 0  | 0  | 2  | 2 |
| Snow Goose                           | 3      | 0  | 0  | 1  | 4 | 0         | 0  | 0  | 6  | 6 |
| Sage Grouse                          | 3      | 0  | 0  | 2  | 5 | 0         | 0  | 0  | 5  | 5 |
| American Goldfinch                   | 5      | 1  | 1  | 1  | 8 | 0         | 0  | 0  | 2  | 2 |
| <b>Zen Buddhist/dismissing</b>       |        |    |    |    |   |           |    |    |    |   |
| Spotted Dove                         | 5      | 0  | 1  | 1  | 7 | 0         | 0  | 0  | 2  | 2 |
| Canyon Wren                          | 4      | 0  | 0  | 0  | 4 | 1         | 0  | 0  | 2  | 3 |
| <b>Zen-Buddhist/preoccupied</b>      |        |    |    |    |   |           |    |    |    |   |
| Ivory-Billed Woodpecker              | 2      | 0  | 0  | 0  | 2 | 0         | 0  | 1  | 1  | 2 |
| Mountain Bluebird                    | 2      | 0  | 0  | 1  | 3 | 0         | 0  | 1  | 1  | 2 |
| <b>Non-Buddhist/secure</b>           |        |    |    |    |   |           |    |    |    |   |
| Alpine Lily                          | 0      | 0  | 0  | 3  | 3 | 1         | 0  | 4  | 4  | 9 |
| Beach Strawberry                     | 4      | 0  | 0  | 2  | 6 | 1         | 0  | 2  | 1  | 4 |
| Seaside Daisy                        | 0      | 0  | 0  | 2  | 2 | 0         | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1 |
| California Poppy                     | 0      | 0  | 1  | 2  | 3 | 0         | 0  | 2  | 2  | 4 |
| <b>Non-Buddhist/dismissing</b>       |        |    |    |    |   |           |    |    |    |   |
| Leopard Lily                         | 2      | 0  | 0  | 0  | 2 | 0         | 0  | 2  | 0  | 2 |
| <b>Non-Buddhist/fearful-avoidant</b> |        |    |    |    |   |           |    |    |    |   |
| Mountain Dogwood                     | 3      | 0  | 0  | 0  | 3 | 0         | 1  | 1  | 1  | 3 |
| Gilia                                | 4      | 0  | 0  | 0  | 4 | 0         | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1 |
| <b>Non-Buddhist/preoccupied</b>      |        |    |    |    |   |           |    |    |    |   |
| Ninebark                             | 2      | 0  | 0  | 2  | 4 | 0         | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0 |

*Note.* Rel affiliation = religious affiliation, att style = attachment style, T = Total.



In Tables 36 through 43, examples of interviewee responses illustrating each of the eight themes is provided, one from a Zen Buddhist interviewee and one from a non-Buddhist interviewee, when possible.

Table 36

*Agentic Theme: Self-Mastery*

| Religious affiliation and participant | Participant illustration   | Comments   |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Zen Buddhist, Canyon Wren             | <i>Saying that the only transformational thing that works for me then is to deeply be with things [during meditation], and only I can do that, and to just let them hurt when they hurt and let them sting when they sting, and there is something about the willingness to do that which seems very hard and takes a lot of courage that transforms things at least somewhat. It doesn't seem to change things entirely, but it brings about or enables the possibility of some transformation.</i> | An effective action that serves to strengthen the self |
| Non-Buddhist, Beach Strawberry        | <i>And for some reason that was like this moment crystallized in my life where I thought to myself, "She's making her own mess, and I'm trying to get her out of it. It ain't working, and I'm not gonna do this anymore."</i>   | A realization that strengthens the self                |

Table 37

*Agentic Theme: Status/Victory*

| Religious affiliation and participant | Participant illustration   | Comments              |
|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| Zen Buddhist, American Goldfinch      | <i>When I wrestled in college—the last two years I wrestled, I didn't think about winning and losing very much. So I wasn't like trying to prove myself. I just wrestled really well. I won without thinking about it.</i> | A victory over others |

Table 38

*Agentic Theme: Achievement/Responsibility*

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| Religious affiliation<br>and participant | Participant illustration  | Comments  |
|--|---|---|
| Zen Buddhist,<br>Spotted Dove            | <i>I was asked to read a very short biblical something—Old Testament psalm or something like that and, um, all that fear came up, and I was . . . of course, the nuns had asked me, so I had to say, “Yes,” but for some reason I was able to just say it, and say it clearly and loudly, you know, without hesitating, and I just remember feeling, “Wow. I can actually do that.” So, so, um, I just remember that I felt, um, proud of that.</i> | Successful achievement of a school-related task |
| Non-Buddhist,<br>California Poppy        | <i>I'm appreciative that my mom and dad did want me to go and do that because, you know, not only did it help them, but it taught me a lesson that I think has carried through in my lifetime because I do consider myself to be a responsible person.</i>  | Able to assume adult responsibilities           |

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Table 39

*Agentic Theme: Empowerment*

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| Religious affiliation<br>and participant | Participant illustration   | Comments   |
|--|--|--|
| Zen Buddhist,<br>Mountain Bluebird       | <i>And, uh, I went and saw him, and he said, "I am going to give you a mantra", and so what happened was we went into another room. . . . and, um, he began a little ritual in what I suspect was Sanskrit, but it may have been Hindi. . . . and, uh, then he turned to me, and he said this phrase to me, and he said, "Say that." And I did that. And he said, "Say it in your mind," and I did that. And he said, "Close your eyes and say it." And I did all of those things, and all of the sudden, I had this really strong, uh, transformation. I felt, you know, outwardly different.</i> | Interaction with<br>spiritual teacher<br>enhances self     |
| Non-Buddhist,<br>California Poppy        | <i>There was a moment in time where I felt like I needed to be saved, and at that point, I could just feel the presence of the Lord, and I did give my heart and my life to Him and ask Him to come into my heart to become my personal savior, and, um, and I feel like that is the most transforming moment of my whole life when I did ask Jesus to come into my heart to be my savior. I could, um, I could just feel, I just felt totally different afterward.</i>  | Participant is<br>empowered by<br>relationship with<br>God |

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Table 40

*Communion Theme: Love/Friendship*

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| Religious affiliation<br>and participant | Participant illustration  | Comments                                       |
|--|---|--|
| Zen Buddhist, Canyon<br>Wren             | <i>So I don't know why this incident . . . this incident . . . I always remember this incident because it's so confusing because my sister thinks that it happened to her, and there's the fact that we were really close growing up, and sometimes it was very confusing about whatever happened to one of us because in some respect what happened to one was happening to the other at the same time.</i>  | A close relationship between sisters           |
| Non-Buddhist, Beach<br>Strawberry        | <i>I think the experience of meeting him [my husband] and of having, of being in relationship with him and realizing there is such a thing as a normal relationship and a person you could rely on and a person that you could trust, and even though you change as you get older, things remain the same, and I think . . . his view of me transformed my view of myself in terms of seeing me as a person through the eyes of someone who loved me, um, so I would say that the experience of being married did and has continued to transform me for the past, meeting him, for the past thirty years in a good way.</i> | A loving relationship between husband and wife |

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Table 41

*Communion Theme: Dialogue*

| Religious affiliation and participant | Participant illustration   | Comments   |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Non-Buddhist, Mountain Dogwood        | <i>You know, they [my kids] talk to me about anything and everything, and they're not afraid to have a conversation . . . you know, they can still have their own opinion.</i> | Reciprocal form of communication between parent and children |

Table 42

*Communion Theme: Caring/Helping*

| Religious affiliation and participant | Participant illustration   | Comments  |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Zen Buddhist, Ivory-billed Woodpecker | <i>I think that something went along with the little boy on the sidewalk one where I found myself reaching out to that little boy and cuddling him up in my lap and acting as a protector, so I'm sitting zazen basically with this wide open but somewhat fearful child in my lap and spent the next few days just carrying him around and making him feel very safe, which of course made me feel much better, and then I found myself going back and forth between being the small child being carried around quite safely by this huge powerful guardian and being the guardian, and there was an integration to that that was really quite wonderful.</i> | Participant provides care to inner-child                      |
| Non-Buddhist, Alpine Lily             | <i>Okay, and, um, we do a lot of foster care, and I do a lot of mentoring for young moms and some teen girls whose parents send them to me.</i>  | Providing care and assistance for foster children and mothers |

Table 43

*Communion Theme: Unity/Togetherness*

| Religious affiliation and participant | Participant illustration  | Comments                            |
|---------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Zen Buddhist, Ivory-billed Woodpecker | <i>The one time that I think it dawned on me strongly is when we were talking about Kanzeon [female incarnation of the Buddha] or singing a song or something about Quan Yin [female incarnation of the Buddha] having thousands of arms and eyes, and it occurred to me that was really an accurate description of the whole group of people that were sitting around [in a meditation retreat] at St. Dorothy's, and at the time there was no sense at all of being some little individual piece with just two arms and two eyes, but actually there was a huge sense of actually being everybody and having thousands of arms and hands.</i> | Experience of oneness               |
| Non-Buddhist, Beach Strawberry        | <i>. . . those were the days that were wonderful, and for whatever reason something about the salty air . . . um, always in a good mood, always having fun, and we would play, and we would all play in the water, and it would make me think of that thing when, um, from Chorus Line, that song that everything was beautiful at the ballet . . . and we would all go to the beach, and everything would be fine, and would suddenly almost be the Cleavers.</i>  | A sense of togetherness with family |

### *Conclusion*

Concerning romantic relationships, while insecure participants were less likely to marry overall, a greater percentage of both secure and insecure non-Buddhists were married when compared with Zen Buddhists in that respect. Zen Buddhists were also somewhat more likely to have been married and divorced more times. In terms of major

attachment-related events, more non-Buddhists reported parental divorce and parental substance abuse when compared with the frequency of such reports by Zen Buddhists, whereas Zen Buddhists reported childhood physical and emotional abuse more frequently. Descriptive statistics also revealed that more secure Zen Buddhists reported one or more disruptive attachment-related events occurring in childhood than did secure non-Buddhists, and more insecure non-Buddhists reported one or more disruptive attachment-related events in childhood than did insecure Zen Buddhists. Finally, the majority of participants in both groups who reported one or more disruptive attachment-events in childhood scored as secure on the *ECR-R*. Despite the quantity or nature of these events, only one quarter to one third of individuals who reported one or more disruptive attachment-events in childhood were classified as having an insecure (preoccupied, dismissing, or fearful-avoidant) attachment status. The same results were also found for participants who did not report any major attachment-related events occurring in childhood: Most were secure, and a minority was insecure.

This researcher postulated that those with increasing years of Zen Buddhist meditation practice would be more often categorized as secure on the *ECR-R* when compared with non-Buddhists. Quantitative analysis, however, showed no significant difference between the attachment styles of Buddhists and non-Buddhists, regardless of years of meditation practice. Moreover, it also revealed no significant relationship between years of meditation and Anxiety scores, Avoidance scores, or the average score on both attachment dimensions. Additionally, no significant difference was discovered between religious affiliation and Anxiety scores, Avoidance scores, or the average score on both of those attachment dimensions. This researcher also predicted that Zen

Buddhists would be classified as secure more often to the frequency of such a classification in American attachment norms; however, no difference was found between Zen Buddhist attachment styles and American attachment norms. A discussion of these findings and their relationship to qualitative results will follow.

For the qualitative portion of this study, categorical-content narrative analysis showed that secure and insecure participants in both groups reported an identical number of positive, negative, traumatic, and neutral memories. Nonetheless, for Zen Buddhists rated as insecure, childhood attachment-related recollections were accompanied by emotional resolution twice as often when compared with those of insecure non-Buddhists. It was also found that participants who did not identify with any religious framework reported the highest number of negative memories and felt the least amount of emotional resolution in the present in regard to those memories. Holistic-form analysis showed that the majority of Zen Buddhist participant interviewees constructed progressive romantic plots. Half of non-Buddhist interviewees who were actively engaged in spiritual practices also offered narratives reflective of a romantic genre. Of the remaining non-Buddhist participants, those who did not identify with any religious framework offered satirical and comical plots, as well as tragic plots, that focused on loss, isolation, and confusion.

While this researcher also hypothesized that the autobiographical narratives of Zen Buddhists would reflect themes pertaining to interrelatedness (communion) more often than individualistic ideals, categorical-content analysis demonstrated the opposite: Zen Buddhists articulated themes of agency, particularly self-mastery, more often than did non-Buddhists. Conversely, non-Buddhists portrayed themes of communion more often than did Zen Buddhists. In terms of which communally oriented themes were



portrayed, non-Buddhists presented the most examples of love/friendship and caring/helping. Zen Buddhists tended to report experiences of unity/togetherness more often, but these experiences depicted a non-dualistic interdependent sense of oneness, whereas those of non-Buddhists generally involved experiences of harmony and solidarity with family members. The discussion section will provide possible explanations for these results.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Zen Buddhist practice affects the attachment styles and autobiographical component of American practitioners' internal representations of early child-parent attachment bonds. A secondary area of inquiry included the influence of the dominant Western social ideal of self-contained individualism on participants' attachment-related childhood narratives. Overall, data revealed unexpected outcomes in that many of the research findings refuted predictions made at the onset of this study.

### *Evaluation of Results*

Analysis of demographic data revealed that all insecure participants in this study were less likely to marry. It also reflected that a greater percentage of both secure and insecure non-Buddhists were married when compared with Zen Buddhists in that respect, and that Zen Buddhists were somewhat more likely to have married and divorced a greater number of times. In light of attachment theory, it comes as no surprise that insecure Zen Buddhist and non-Buddhist participants alike were less likely to marry. Because romantic attachments produce higher levels of anxiety, avoidance, or both anxiety and avoidance for insecure individuals, it is probable that the inclination to avoid distressing emotions by shying away from romantic involvement is more prevalent for those classified as insecure. As to why both secure and insecure Zen Buddhists were less likely to marry than were non-Buddhists, this cannot be accounted for by attachment classifications, as there was no statistically significant difference between groups.

Zen Buddhist participants, however, primarily resided in the state of California, whereas almost three quarters of non-Buddhists resided in other states, such as

Tennessee. In 2007, the Centers for Disease Control (Centers for Disease Control [CDC], National Center for Health Statistics) reported that the marriage rate (i.e., the annual number of marriages per 1,000 inhabitants) for Californians was 6.2%. In the same year, an article appeared in the Oakland Tribune (Swift, 2007) reporting that the marriage rate in the state of California had steadily declined since the year 2000 to an all-time low, leaving married couples as a new minority. In contrast, the CDC reported a marriage rate at 10.1 % for Tennessee and similar rates for many Southern states in 2007.

Furthermore, the majority of non-Buddhists identified as Christian, a religion that, in its more traditional forms, has actively advocated for both marriage and procreation between men and women. In conventional Zen Buddhism, however, which has historically been dominated by monks and nuns leading monastic lifestyles, wedding ceremonies have been viewed as a secular affair occurring amongst lay practitioners and have not been emphasized. As Zen Buddhism has only recently become established in the West, marriage may inadvertently continue to occupy a position of lesser importance among masters, teachers, and students.

Finally, despite the fact that Buddhists deem the community and companionship of practitioners (*sangha*) to be one of the three sacred jewels of practice, American Buddhism often conjures an image centered on withdrawal from social affairs to attend to the “priority of meditation” (Hershock, 1996, p. 85). Perhaps this private, inward aspect of practice, although not necessarily an accurate portrayal of the whole of Zen Buddhist tradition, appeals to individuals who, for any number of reasons, value solitude over romantic involvement. There are undoubtedly also Zen Buddhist practitioners who mistakenly attempt to justify and sidestep fears of intimacy by claiming their dedication

to the Dharma and meditative training proves altogether incompatible with the demands that a spouse and family would bring, although this subject constitutes another area of research altogether.

In terms of major attachment-related events, more non-Buddhists reported parental divorce and parental substance abuse when compared with Zen Buddhists reporting such an experience, whereas Zen Buddhists reported childhood physical and emotional abuse more frequently. Given the extensive variety of factors that may have contributed to this finding, it is difficult to offer any definitive rationale as to why this might have occurred. Nonetheless, this finding may relate with the research of Kirkpatrick (1995) and Granqvist (1998), whose works were already reviewed in this study, and who suggest that internal working models of attachment may offer an important framework for exploring why individuals feel an affinity with specific spiritual paths as adults.

For example, parental divorce and parental substance abuse typically produce relational disconnection and lowered levels of involvement between family members (Minuchin, 1974). For adults who grew up without a parent, or in an emotionally disengaged family, the congregational community that exists in many Christian churches may hold an extrinsic appeal, for many forms of Christianity practiced in the United States stress the importance of large, tightly knit communities in which involved families routinely support social community and religious events. Moreover, Kirkpatrick (1992, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999) suggests that, for those with insecure attachment histories, the image of God may serve as an important surrogate attachment figure. Granqvist (1998) also presents evidence for a compensation theory of adult religiosity and proposes

the theory that some religious practices serve as an attempt on the part of the practitioner to gain an otherwise absent sense of security and regulate emotional distress.

Conversely, traumas such as childhood physical and emotional abuse represent a detrimental form of enmeshment in that extreme violations of the child's boundaries become the norm within the family system (Minuchin, 1994). In turn, this may provoke adult survivors to favor a spiritual path that offers the social and emotional solitude found during periods of meditation in Buddhist zendos. Likewise, Zen Buddhism lacks a central creator deity with whom one is encouraged to form a personal, affective bond, and this may appeal to those whose parental relationships were marked by threats, fear, or cruelty.

Descriptive demographic statistics also showed that a somewhat greater percentage of Zen Buddhist participants reported one or more attachment-related disturbances in childhood when compared with non-Buddhists participants' report frequency in that regard. One explanation for this may be that a major and well-known tenet of Buddhism, the First Noble Truth, holds that life is inevitably and perpetually marked by conditions that produce suffering.

The exact meaning of the First Noble Truth is this: Life (in the condition it has got itself into) is dislocated. Something has gone wrong. It is out of joint. As its pivot is not true, friction (interpersonal conflict) is excessive, movement (creativity) is blocked, and it hurts. (Smith & Novak, 2003, p. 34)

In turn, Buddhism offers distinct practices that aim specifically to alleviate this suffering. Hence, Buddhism may appeal to an unusually high number of individuals intent on unburdening themselves of the emotional turmoil linked with past events.

Simultaneously, dedicated Buddhist practice also involves lengthy periods of meditation during which many individuals are provided with a rare opportunity closely to

witness mental and emotional processes that otherwise escape ordinary attention. Because intervals of meditation also invite increased accessibility to a variety of recollections and improve memory (Lazar, 2005), Zen Buddhists may simply remember and reflect on childhood memories more often than those who do not engage in meditation.

One of the more curious demographic findings in this study was that the majority of participants in both groups who reported one or more disruptive attachment-related events in childhood scored as secure on the *ECR-R*. Hence, despite the quantity or nature of interruptions in parental caregiving, only one quarter to one third of individuals who reported them were classified as having an insecure (preoccupied, dismissing, or fearful-avoidant) attachment status. Furthermore, for participants who did not report any detrimental parent-child relational events occurring in childhood, the same results applied.

If these findings are in fact reliable, several implications should be considered. The first is that perhaps some participants unintentionally misreported whether certain types of childhood events occurred. Second, differential adult attachment classifications do not necessarily result from experiential factors in childhood, such as parental mental and physical illness, maternal and/or paternal deprivation, or child maltreatment. Third, this finding more broadly suggests that caregiver sensitivity may have a lesser influence on patterns of attachment than suggested by numerous other studies showing that attachment styles arise from the overall quality of the empathic bond between the child and its caregivers and parental attachment style.

This work previously discussed that those with a dismissing adult attachment category frequently insist that cannot recall childhood experiences, or they avoid

discussion of experiences with caregivers, despite making vague references to a positive upbringing (Hesse, 1999). Also formerly stated was a limitation recognizing that traumatic events “lead to errors and fabrications in memory [and] in the construction of partial or inaccurate life themes” (Barclay, 1996, p. 113). This has particular bearing on the fact that approximately one quarter to one third of those who did not report any major attachment-related events in childhood scored as insecure on the *ECR-R*. Consequently, it should be taken into account that some participants may have had a defensive cognitive strategy of dismissing or forgetting attachment-related instances, and that such a strategy may have reduced the viability of this finding.

Secondly, the long-term consequences of events thought negatively to impact attachment relationships may be somewhat overemphasized both in this study and in the field of attachment research as a whole. It should be considered that a succession of influences likely has as much bearing on attachment patterns as singular isolated events (Caprara & Cervone, 2000). For example, previously reviewed studies claim that threats to attachment security and parental availability must be perceived by the child as threatening in order to exert a disruptive influence on relational security. “Open communication can greatly reduce the extent to which disruptive events are perceived as threatening the availability of an attachment figure” (Kobak, 1999, p. 33). Hence, the predictive value of discrete incidents that purportedly damage bonding between children and primary caregivers may be subject to a highly complex assortment of influences that are difficult to evaluate empirically, particularly retrospectively, and that, therefore, could not be accounted for in this work.

As for the third implication, it was aforementioned that the level of sensitive, empathic attunement of caregivers to the needs of their offspring does not conclusively portend specific developmental outcomes. For instance, some researchers (Caprara & Cervone, 2000) contend that a biological predisposition toward anxiety and social inhibition renders some children relatively more vulnerable to forming insecure attachments, notwithstanding optimal caregiving. The temperament and physical health of some infants and children may also influence parenting in that competent and emotionally available parents may have heightened difficulty bonding with and rearing children who cry continuously and leave families deprived of restorative rest for months on end (Caprara & Cervone). Beyond these dynamics, a multitude of other environmental factors entirely unrelated to a child's temperament or parent's caregiving skills may exert a powerful influence on behavior. For instance, lack of social support, environmental contaminates, war, or global economic depression may hold significant long-term bearing on attachment outcomes.

Finally, Westerners often overlook two other potential influences that may impact parent-child bonding and attachment: prenatal development and reincarnation. Because the mechanistic Western medical model views "consciousness as a function of the central nervous system" (Wade, 1996, p. 25) and upholds that the brain and nervous functions of the embryo are at a stage of incomplete development, fetal awareness and its implications are rarely considered. "Nevertheless, psychological researchers have amassed evidence for a sophisticated, mature consciousness whose origins significantly predate the requisite neurological development" (Wade, 1996, p. 29). For instance, Wade (2001) reports that a fetus at age 7-1/2 weeks will exhibit attempts to evade facial contact with a filament by



twisting its body away from the source of the stimuli. In light of that finding, data signify that any combination of negative external environmental stimuli, maternal emotional distress, physical illness, or physiological biochemical imbalance could profoundly alter both pre- and post-natal development in a manner seldom considered by attachment theorists. Furthermore, because a worldview that links all events to physical and material causes dominates Western culture, non-physical explanations for events, such as the karmic influence of past lives and reincarnation, are also often negated. Although the presence in the individual of a karmic history is generally scorned as superstition in the West, millions of Hindus and Buddhists widely accept past-life karma as a legitimate phenomenon strongly impacting an individual's circumstances from the moment of conception.

One researcher in particular, Dr. Ian Stephenson (1974, 1975, 1977, 1980, 1983, 1997, 2001), produced extensive research relating birthmarks and congenital conditions to past-life events in addition to conducting other studies examining past-life recall and its impact on parent-child bonding. Traveling through countries including India, Sri Lanka, and Burma, Stephenson interviewed children who recollected details of previous lives and their families, and he then obtained available records and photographs to verify evidence of a past existence. In some instances, information was discovered that scientific explanations could not account for. Although attachment theorists do not incorporate fetal consciousness and the influence of past lives into the understanding of particular styles of attachment and parent-child bonding, such elements do warrant further consideration in light of supporting evidence.

Nonetheless, the implication that attachment styles may be more biologically, environmentally, or even pre-natally or karmically based rather than contingent on healthy parent-child ties contradicts a vast multitude of large-scale, empirical studies attesting to the critical importance of parental attachment styles and empathic, sensitive, and attuned caregiving relationships. Given the small sample size of this study and the inability on the part of this researcher to ascertain either the severity or duration of major attachment-related events occurring in participants' childhoods or the parental responses to these events, it will be assumed in this present study, despite data that may suggest the contrary, that both unfavorable parent-child relational events occurring in childhood and parental caregiving styles do impact long-term attachment patterns to a noteworthy extent.

In terms of the results of quantitative analysis, this researcher theorized that American Zen Buddhist practitioners with increasing years of meditation practice would score as secure more often on the *ECR-R*. A MANOVA test, however, illuminated no significant difference between the attachment styles of American Zen Buddhists and American non-Buddhists, regardless of years of meditation practice. Moreover, MANOVA analysis also revealed no significant relationship between years of meditation and Anxiety scores, Avoidance scores, or the average score on both of those attachment dimensions. Additionally, no significant difference was discovered between religious affiliation and Anxiety scores, Avoidance scores, or the average score on both of those attachment dimensions. This researcher also predicted that American Zen Buddhists would be classified as secure more often when compared with the frequencies of that classification established in the American attachment norms; however, a chi-square

goodness of fit test reflected no difference between Zen Buddhist attachment styles and American attachment norms. Hence, quantitative evidence generated during this study indicated that, in respect to the interplay between attachment theory and specific religious practices, neither Zen Buddhist meditation practice nor other religious frameworks exert a transformational influence on adult behavior in romantic relationships.

It may be that the key to these results rests not in the belief structures or religious practices of those who volunteered to take part in this study but in participants' cultural orientation. All members of this study were at least second-generation American citizens who were isolated culturally in that they had not lived or traveled outside of this country extensively. Hence, these results may be attributed to the fact that cultural processes exert a stronger influence on attachment than do religious beliefs.

Categorical-content narrative analysis also supports this assumption. Whereas this researcher hypothesized that the autobiographical narratives of Zen Buddhists would reflect themes pertaining to interrelatedness (communion) more often than to individualistic ideals, due to the influence of a religious practice originating in communally oriented cultures, categorical-content analysis demonstrated the opposite. Zen Buddhists articulated themes of agency, particularly self-mastery, more often than did non-Buddhists. Conversely, non-Buddhists portrayed themes of communion, particularly love/friendship and caring/helping, more often than did Zen Buddhists.

A co-constructivist perspective framing attachment as both an innate, biologically based phenomenon occurring universally across cultures and also a process subject to cultural influences was previously mentioned in this work. Cross-cultural attachment researchers van Ijzendoorn and Sagi (1999) propose that, "What seem to be universal are

the general cultural pressures toward the selection of the secure attachment patterns in the majority of children, and the preference for the secure child in parents across cultures” (p. 730). They simultaneously observe the necessity for differentiation of attachment strategies in order for children to adapt to environmental challenges unique to various cultural contexts.

Both the quantitative and qualitative results of this study support this perspective, in that the attachment styles of participants as measured by the *ECR-R* in both groups did not differ regardless of religious affiliation or years of meditation practice. They also did not differ from American normative attachment patterns obtained by Ainsworth et al. (1978). Hence, it might be concluded that the American cultural context exerted the strongest influence on the attachment strategies of all participants.

In addition, qualitative results showed that the 8 Zen Buddhist participants who were interviewed tended to conform to the ideal of self-contained individualism and to articulate themes of agency, whereas non-Buddhists referenced communalistic themes. Given the relatively short length of time that Zen Buddhism has been established in the United States, many contemporary American Zen Buddhists choose to become Buddhist in adulthood rather than having been raised within a Buddhist religious framework. This also applied to all Zen Buddhist participants in this study. While a small minority became involved in Zen Buddhism as teenagers, most became practicing Zen Buddhists in later adulthood. Conversely, the 8 non-Buddhist participants interviewed during this research project had been raised in Christian households and indoctrinated with the tenets of Christianity since early childhood. Half had continued to be active members of a Christian church throughout their lives, and some continued to identify as Christian,

although they did not engage in formal religious practices.

Exposure to a Christian religious framework in infancy and onward may account for the multitude of communalistic themes portrayed by non-Buddhists. Indeed, many of the Christian participants repeatedly stated that their love for God was best expressed in emulating the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ through dedicated service to their families, children, communities, and the environment at large. Although the early influence of Christianity may not have altered overriding cultural pressures toward specific attachment styles, it may have modified the influence of self-contained individualism on non-Buddhist participants' self-expression and personality organization. This may be seen in the autobiographical narratives of non-Buddhist participants who expressed communal themes more often than might be anticipated in a highly individualistic culture. Therefore, it may be that religious beliefs adopted in adulthood ultimately exert a lesser influence on implicit behavior, for these are not introduced at critical periods of personality formation.

It is also important to note that, for Zen Buddhists, the increased focus on agency, self-mastery, and personal insight may be the by-product of a practice in which one's thought processes are continually witnessed and brought into question. The practice of meditation often requires hours spent staring at a blank wall and certainly offers ample opportunities for self-reflection, and this may account for heightened self-focus among participants in this study. In fact, the Japanese word *sesshin*, typically used by American Zen Buddhists to denote a meditation retreat, literally means "to collect thoughts" (Radcliff & Radcliff, 1993, p.136). Certainly some aspects of Buddhist teachings that are not necessarily democratic in the political sense do possess a democratic flavor. For example, Buddhism teaches that the process of realization comes about through

earnestness and personal effort on behalf of the student. Therefore, Zen Buddhists may show increased levels of autonomy and self-mastery because the discipline of practice requires such traits. Of course, for some Zen Buddhist participants in this study, the practice of meditation may also have been mistakenly conflated with self-actualization, which is not the aim of the Buddhist spiritual path, but, for some Westerners, is one outcome.

Another important consideration pertaining to the frequency with which themes of agency and communion were reported by Zen Buddhists and non-Buddhists relates to the gender imbalance between groups in this study. Whereas Zen Buddhist interviewees consisted of 4 men and 4 women, all non-Buddhist interviewees were female. Although this researcher is unwilling to adopt Bakan's (1966) stance that agency and communion are gender-linked personality orientations, it is a common stereotype in Western cultures that women tend to focus on the needs of others and the importance of emotional expressiveness in relationships more often than do men. It is also often presumed that women are more frequently in the role of nurturing families and children than are men. Conversely, characteristics such as assertiveness and greater focus on career and personal achievement are more often attributed to men. While it was not an aim of this research endeavor to determine whether these popular social stereotypes possess a factual basis, it is worth noting the possibility that non-Buddhists may have showed greater focus on communion than Zen Buddhists because all non-Buddhists interviewees were women, many of whom had families and children.

Although evidence reviewed in this study suggests that those reporting relational disruptions in childhood are more likely to receive an attachment rating of insecure, there

were more Zen Buddhists than non-Buddhists whose attachment classification was secure, despite a background that would suggest a higher potential for adult relational difficulties. This stands in contrast to this study's quantitative data, which indicated that religious practices have no effect on attachment styles, inasmuch as no statistically significant difference in attachment classifications between groups was noted. Again, one potential cause for this reporting—an increase in the accessibility of recollections—was discussed in the preceding section. A second potential cause—the difficulty in relying on event reporting to predict attachment outcomes—was also examined. Nonetheless, if a meaningful correlation between disturbed attachment relations and childhood attachment classifications may be assumed, and if attachment styles do perpetuate across the life course, the finding that a greater percentage of Zen Buddhists are securely attached in adult relationships in spite of negative child-parent relational influences leaves open the possibility that Zen Buddhist practice exerts a transformational influence on practitioners' attachment styles.

More support for this assumption arises from categorical-content analysis, for the childhood attachment-related recollections of Zen Buddhists rated as insecure were accompanied by emotional resolution twice as often as were those of non-Buddhists.

One contrary consideration for this finding, however, was that, while there were no interviewees among Zen Buddhists who were classified as fearful-avoidant (for which finding they would have scored as both highly anxious and highly avoidant), there were 2 non-Buddhist interviewees who fell into this categorization. Hence, it may be speculated that insecure Zen Buddhist interviewees felt more resolution in regard to early attachment recollections because, although they struggled with either attachment-related anxiety or

avoidance, they did not face challenges in both dimensions of attachment difficulty simultaneously. Nonetheless, participants in both groups reported an identical number of positive, negative, traumatic, and neutral memories, regardless of their attachment rating, so it is difficult to determine what effect, if any, these may have had.

It was also found that participants who did not identify with any religious framework reported the highest number of negative memories and felt the least amount of emotional resolution in the present in regard to those memories. They did, in fact, more often than those who identified with a religious framework, provide autobiographical accounts that provoked distress on recollection, and they typically perceived themselves as having limited agency in interpersonal relationships. This potentially indicates that individuals who understand childhood events and resulting psychological processes in a religious framework feel greater resolution in regard to early attachment experience, irrespective of attachment classification.

Similarly, holistic-form analysis showed that the majority of Zen Buddhist participant interviewees constructed progressive romantic plots when recounting attachment narratives. Half of non-Buddhist interviewees, all of whom were actively engaged in religious practices, also offered narratives in the style of a romantic genre. These plots reflected the self as hero, facing challenges and emerging victoriously, and indicated that the assistance and support in these journeys came in the form of personal religious practices that allowed for the confrontation and transformation of negative situations. Of the remaining non-Buddhist participants, those who did not identify with any religious framework offered satirical and comical plots, as well as tragic plots focused on loss, isolation, and confusion. Because data are assumed (Jantzen, 2008) to



reveal important information with respect to the goals, ideals, perceptions, and identity of the teller, it may be presumed that participants involved with an organized religious system experienced emotional growth and integration to a higher degree than did those who did not view their early experience from the perspective of a religious tradition.

### *Summary of Findings*

The results of this study must be interpreted with certain constraints in mind. Given the small sample size, the number of variables that could not be controlled or accounted for, and the qualitative methodologies used in this work, many of these results cannot necessarily be generalized. They do, however, provide valuable information for understanding how Zen Buddhism and other religious paths influence Americans' attachment styles and internal representations of early child-parent attachment bonds. Knowledge pertaining to the influence that the dominant Western social ideal of self-contained individualism had on participants' attachment-related childhood narratives was also gained.

In terms of one of the main inquiries of this project—whether or not the adult attachment categories of Zen Buddhist practitioners changes as a function of increasing years of meditation practice—both contrary and supporting evidence was explored. On the one hand, quantitative analysis offered numerous indicators that adult behavior in romantic relationships is altered by neither Zen Buddhism nor other religious frameworks. On the other hand, although secure attachment ratings were congruent between groups, more Zen Buddhists exhibited secure attachment classifications, in spite of reporting unfavorable early familial situations. Because this finding may be attributed to a number of factors, however, it cannot be decisively shown to support the original

hypothesis. For this reason, it cannot be conclusively determined from the results of this study whether Zen Buddhism positively transforms long-term implicit attachment patterns, although a greater number of indicators suggest that it does not.

Another line of inquiry in this study included a comparison of how American non-Buddhists and American Zen Buddhists at varying stages of meditation practice represented early attachment experiences with caregivers when providing self-defining autobiographical memory narratives. Although the narrative accounts of Zen Buddhists and non-Buddhists possessed similar content insofar as both groups described common types of events, the interpretation of events differed. Zen Buddhists reported higher levels of emotional resolution in regard to recollections of negative attachment experience, and the plot lines of their stories more often reflected a protagonist who attained success and desired outcomes when compared with plot lines of the non-Buddhists. Hence, although childhood memories appeared to remain centrally organizing principles of self-identity for American Zen Buddhists, even after prolonged periods of practice, these memories seemed to possess less emotional valence when compared with those of non-Buddhists.

Overall, the memory accounts of Zen Buddhists also reflected enhanced awareness of internal models, regardless of attachment bonding styles. Negative biases in which the self was viewed as unworthy of affection and/or in which others were viewed as rejecting and unavailable arising from unfavorable internal working models of early relationships were recognized, questioned, and cognitively challenged more frequently by Zen Buddhists. Maladaptive behavioral patterns in which efforts to control or manipulate others were also observed and articulated more often, and representational models of relationships involving the self as victim and others as perpetrators were confronted and

meaningfully transformed, as well. Hence, these findings suggest that Zen Buddhist practice results in increased flexibility in how childhood attachment memories are remembered, as well as transforming how those events inform present experience. Additionally, it seemed that other religious practices that enabled individuals to frame the meaning of early attachment experience in a broader spiritual context also led to greater acceptance, coherence, and enhanced sense of purpose for non-Buddhists participants. For example, the autobiographical stories of non-Buddhists who identified as Christian illuminated shifts in self/other conceptualizations in a manner that enhanced overall mental health and well-being when compared with the frequency of such enhancement occurrences for those who did not ascribe to any religious belief system. Therefore, this researcher echoes the work of others (L.K. George, Larson, Koenig, & McCollough, 2000; Koltko, 1989; Laurencelle, Abell, & Schwartz, 2002; Pargament, 2002; Rose, Westefeld, & Ansley, 2001; Steger & Frazier, 2005; Westgate, 1996) in suggesting that religious frameworks may help to enhance well-being, confer purpose, and increase one's sense of belonging, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable life circumstances.

A final area of interest in this project was the influence of self-contained individualism—a social tradition dominant in much of Western culture—on the autobiographical narratives of Americans practicing Zen Buddhism. Because Buddhism originated in East Asian cultures, where interrelatedness and communal interactions have traditionally been favored over self-focused pursuits, it was predicted that Zen Buddhists would show decreased self-focus and greater concern for the ideals of interrelatedness when compared with non-Buddhists. Instead, non-Buddhists referenced greater concern than did Zen Buddhists with caring for relationships with families, children, animals, and

the community and environment at large. Although the influence religious conventions may exert on internal working models cannot be definitively ascertained from these results, it might be speculated that religious customs indoctrinated during the earliest years of development may have had greater bearing on personality organization than those adopted in adulthood.

*Clinical and Theoretical Implications for Mainstream and Transpersonal Psychology*

Little doubt exists that psychosocial and emotional difficulties often commence for children raised in homes in which they undergo neglect, maltreatment, and/or traumatic experiences. Countless empirical studies attest to the fact that repeated unfavorable parent behaviors can significantly undermine the social and developmental capacities of a child, and damaging events in one's youth can predispose individuals to holding undesirable views of self and others and interpreting social interactions in a negative manner. In turn, modes of behavior leading to increased victimization, social withdrawal, and other maladaptive patterns may become dominant. It is also noted that these often prove highly resistant to modification in a therapeutic setting (Briere, 1992). Although the transformative potential of religious and/or spiritual matters is typically viewed as outside the scope of clinical psychotherapy, this author proposes, in light of the findings of this study, that certain religious frameworks may have a significant bearing on how adults conceptualize and interpret significant attachment-related events, a theory whose potential implications should not be overlooked in either mainstream or transpersonal psychology.

For the most part, attachment theory and its implications for clinical practice have been largely confined to the psychoanalytic community and the arena of mainstream

psychology. This present work attempted to place John Bowlby's (1969/1982, 1973, 1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1988) theory of attachment into the context of the field of transpersonal psychology, in that it examined how Zen Buddhist practice affected American practitioners' attachment styles and autobiographical narratives of early attachment experiences with caregivers when compared with those of American non-Buddhists. Results suggested that the practice of Zen Buddhism and other religious belief systems, such as Christianity do not alter adult attachment classifications as measured by the *ECR-R*. Results do, however, suggest that the practice of meditation allows for greater flexibility in terms of what salient features of childhood events are recollected and attended to, as well as the meaning they are ascribed in the present and their overall affective imprint. Meditation also appears to allow for the decoupling of automated patterns of response to external stimuli, and, consequently, potentially enables practitioners to make more informed choices in the present. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, this study showed that organized religious frameworks, inclusive of both Zen Buddhism and Christianity, appeared to enhance well-being and foster hopefulness and a sense of purpose in adverse circumstances.

As previously discussed, a steadily unfolding discourse has occurred between Buddhism and mental health workers since Buddhism first became established in the United States. This association between Buddhism and psychology is not surprising, given that many of the aims and discoveries of the modern psychological establishment coincide with Buddhist teachings in meaningful ways. Without a doubt, this cross-pollination has yielded fruitful results in that numerous efficacious modes of psychological treatment have been developed using Buddhist practices as their basis.

Contemporary practitioners who have helped to modify Buddhist practices into effective psychological treatment regimens include Ellis, Kabat-Zinn, Kornfield, Linehan, and Siegel. In particular, some of these clinicians and researchers have adopted the seventh element of the Buddha's Eightfold Path, right mindfulness, and presented it to patients and clients as an awareness activity divorced from a formal religious belief structure or laborious meditation practice—one that can be applied at any time to any situation. Training exercises are used to deepen this awareness in order to assist with the alleviation of a number of medical and psychological conditions such as chronic pain, stress, depression, substance abuse, and personality disorders, with beneficial results.

Because of widespread interest in and research on mindfulness in the field, findings from this study pertaining to the effects of meditation practice on Zen Buddhist participants' perceptions and affective experience of attachment-related events may not necessarily contribute entirely novel information to either transpersonal or mainstream psychology. In fact, some of the results of this study closely correspond with reflections offered by well-known clinician and teacher Daniel Siegel (2007) in his recent publication on attachment and the practice of mindfulness, *The Mindful Brain*.

Although this researcher does not dispute the effectiveness of mindfulness-based practices or object to their widespread use, it is relevant to point out that a vast proportion of modern clinicians and researchers in the field of psychology work to legitimize psychology as a rigorous academic discipline and viable scientific enterprise by asserting that religion and related dimensions of spiritual experience fall outside the scope of practice. In other words, because scientists regard religious and spiritual affairs as outside of what can be validated or measured through scientific means, religion and spirituality

have been marginalized as clinical considerations and relegated to the realm of fantasy and superstition. Hence, it is not uncommon for psychologists to objectify religious customs, strip them of their historical and cultural context, and reduce them to scientific techniques whose value rests only in their utility and applicative convenience.

To be fair, the separation of right mindfulness from the other seven steps in the Eightfold Path and the whole of Buddhism as a tradition exemplifies a tendency not only of those in psychology but of Americans at large to rigidly segregate science from the realm of religion. The reasons for this are many and complex and will not be explored here. What will be explored, however, is the importance for both mainstream and transpersonal psychologists to assess the worth of religious belief systems as a whole, and not as a compilation of more and less valuable artifacts to be collected, examined, quantified, ranked, distilled, and distributed based on their “empirically proven” helpfulness.

Transpersonal psychology has been subject to harsh criticism for devaluing practical personal concerns and/or rich existential issues in favor of the apparent ascendancy of transcendent states of consciousness (Ellis & Yeager, 1989; Hendlin, 1983; May, 1986; Schneider, 1987, 2001; Taylor, 1992). Indeed, in some respects, it could be argued that transpersonal psychology developed as a catch-all receptacle for the glowing shards of extraordinary human experience cascading from the world’s religious and mystical traditions, psychedelic drug use, and other transcendent proceedings after being spurned by psychoanalysts, behaviorists, and even humanistic psychologists. In a culture that systematically rejects the worth of religious beliefs and spiritual customs in the shadow of materialism, medical advancement, and technological success, it is perhaps not

surprising that all matters esoteric and unexplained through scientific logic were grouped under the label “transpersonal” and assigned to a virtually unknown movement in the field of psychology. Unfortunately, attempts made by transpersonalists to unify and prove the scientific value of this glimmering collection of assorted peak experiences and exalted states of consciousness has led to serious issues, both theoretically and in clinical settings (Ferrer, 2002).

In an effort to prove the academic worthiness of transpersonal phenomena to a broader community of mainstream practitioners who have worked tirelessly to establish psychology as a respectable science firmly grounded in logic and reason, transpersonal theorists have also sought to verify the intrinsic value of spiritual experience through empirical scientific study. One method by which this has been done has been to extract what are viewed as discrete transpersonal events from their broader context and demonstrate how these can be reduced to clinically useful, empirically based techniques. In this manner, transpersonal psychologists are guilty of precisely the same material objectification and reductionism to which they are so often vociferously opposed, and in reaction to which that the field coalesced to begin with. In his groundbreaking work, transpersonal researcher Jorge Ferrer (2002) takes note of this trend and warns of the pitfalls of empirically investigating transpersonal and spiritual phenomena as inner individual experiences.

Once inner spiritual experiences are segregated from ethical and traditional contexts, they tend to lose their sacred and transformative quality and become merely peak-experiences—temporary gratifications for an ego hungry for subjective spiritual heights, but often leading toward further self-absorption and narcissism—the antithesis of what the spiritual path strives for. (p. 27)



Moreover, hoping to strengthen and bestow coherence to the field of transpersonal psychology, transpersonalists have sought to unify the disparate varieties of non-ordinary experience that have been clumsily clumped together under a transpersonal heading and politely written off by the American Psychological Association as “outside the scope of practice.” This en bloc categorization has been accomplished primarily through seeking commonalities between numinous experiences. Ferrer (2002) points out that the outcome has been an unfortunate distillation and homogenization of spiritual phenomena that transpire in a rich and highly diverse array of religious and cultural contexts, conditions, and communities. “As we have seen, perennialist models typically assume the existence of a universal spiritual reality which is the Ground of all that is, and of which the contemplative traditions are an expression” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 89). In a sense, this tendency to rely on the apparent unity of all things spiritual implies that the spiritually confused Western seeker, longing more deeply to understand life’s purpose, could, metaphorically speaking, stop by Starbucks and order any tall mystical experience to go. In reality, however, spiritual paths and varieties of religious experience differ in fundamental and important ways, and, despite the fact that many have waged war and committed genocide over these differences, transpersonal theorists seem to neglect the value and importance of these distinctions.

The problematic theoretical stance of transpersonal psychologists also permeates transpersonal psychology as a clinical practice. Although the exploration of mystical awakening and consciousness altering events are of great personal interest to this researcher and other transpersonalists, they are regrettably often irrelevant in the context of therapy, even “transpersonally-oriented” therapy. For example, individuals with

significant attachment-related traumas who exhibit Axis II personality disorders with psychotic features and suicidal ideation are generally not concerned with blocked chakras, ayuhasca rituals, or ultimate states of non-dual unitive consciousness. This is not to say that these same individuals would not benefit from assistance in a spiritual or energetic form—it is just a far more pressing issue that they succeed in finding ways to function on a daily basis. Hence, much of transpersonal inquiry in its present form is not generally helpful for those who are either not interested or whose ego structure and personality organization is significantly compromised.

Although this researcher is certainly not making an effort to diminish or downplay the importance of investigating peak experiences, it is worth considering that transpersonal psychology has undervalued the impact that religious belief systems as a whole have on cognition and functioning in favor of singular specific practices and the phenomenological effects of such practices. What the findings of this study reinforce is that decontextualized episodes of unitive consciousness and specific spiritual “experiences” do not seem to alter fundamental behavioral and relational patterns originating in early childhood that filter and organize functions such as socialization, communication, perception, and motivation. Although certainly valuable and worthy of further exploration, ecstatic spiritual experiences in and of themselves appear more often than not to exert little influence on deep structures of implicit conditioned behavior. In this study, what was instead transfigured was the manner in which the profound affective imprints of early attachment-related events were experienced and beheld. This change occurred through continued participation in organized religious belief systems that included well-established ethical guidelines, the study of sacred texts, and communal

activities. One participant noted that her sense of having been abandoned, which originated in her very early childhood, took on an entirely different meaning after 30 years of Zen Buddhist practice:

The other thing I've noticed about it is that there is this very subtle shift that happens where that sense of being an orphan or of being alone in this unfriendly universe can shift to this sense of aloneness which is kind of, uh, an All Oneness, alone as All Oneness, and a complete intimacy with everything where there is no separation, this kind of ego self that can feel alone in a hostile universe, is, um, a story that drops away, and then, you know, I can be alone here, and I can be alone here, but that sense of the . . . the pain of being alone is not there and instead this kind of joy comes up where there is the feeling of just being completely at home.

Hence, for this participant, the deeply rooted sense of being alone was never eradicated, but the way in which it came to be interpreted and affectively experienced was renewed within the broader context of enhanced spiritual understanding through years of devotion to Zen Buddhism.

Because of the growing interest in mainstream circles in gaining greater understanding of the relationship between religion and well-being (Steger & Frazier, 2005), it may benefit transpersonal psychologists to modify their scope, both theoretically and clinically. Instead of attempting to confirm the intrinsic worth of peak experience and unify a smorgasbord of mystical and psychedelic events by erecting a McDonald's drive-through of numinous wisdom, transpersonalists may be better served by respecting and expanding on the knowledge of how participation in whole systems of well-established organized religions, with their well-developed spiritual customs and communities, impact ordinary daily human life over the long term.

For mainstream psychologists who tend to devalue organized religion in favor of empirically based treatments, findings of this study imply that exploring, validating, and

supporting religious identity may enhance clinical treatment outcomes, inasmuch as religious frameworks seem to enable individuals to frame the meaning and implications of early attachment experience in a broader, enriched context. Hence, it would be advantageous for mainstream practitioners who have dismissed the relevance of organized religion in clinical practice to reevaluate individuals' religious identity, if they possess one, as a valuable resource. In short, for all practitioners, the implications of holding a decontextualized and reductionistic interpretation of religious systems in an attempt to isolate mechanisms and produce cures should be carefully considered before adopting such techniques in therapeutic settings.

*Methodological Considerations: Limitations and Delimitations*

In this section, emphasis will be placed on expected limitations and delimitations mentioned in Chapter 3 that influenced this research process. This study utilized non-equivalent groups design in that the groups were as similar as possible, but they may not have been as similar as they would have been if they had been randomly assigned (Trochim, 2006). Therefore, it was difficult to control for the internal validity threat of selection. One of the outcomes of this recruitment design was that the proportion of men to women among non-Buddhist participants was unequal to that of men to women in the Zen Buddhist group. It is unknown what outcome, if any, this had on the study, but it did create an imbalance between groups such that participants could not be matched based on sex. A second consideration was the distribution of locale between groups. While Zen Buddhists resided primarily in California, most non-Buddhists lived in the Midwest and Southern states, and this difference of demographics may account for differences in marriage status. Additionally, other prior group differences such as temperament,

resilience, and biological predispositions that may have had bearing on attachment styles could not be accounted for.

In terms of selection-history threat, those with a Zen Buddhist practice were chosen to participate in the study. Of those participants, only 2 were involved in Soto Zen tradition. All others were students of the Rinzai Zen tradition in John Tarrant Roshi's Zen lineage that comes through the Harada-Yastuni lineage of Zen. This uniformity of students also served to minimize the threat of selection-instrumentation. Nonetheless, some participants had formerly practiced Vipassana or Dzogchen before committing to Zen practice, and it is unknown what outcome this religious history had on participants' attachment styles and their adult experience of attachment patterns.

For the narrative analysis portion of this study, it is noteworthy to emphasize that the researcher selected what was considered to be relevant, worthy, and important information about subjective personal experience. Participants who were interviewed in this work were gracious enough to offer intimate details about their lives and their perspective on past events, and what they shared at the time can be viewed only as a snapshot of the moment. The researcher's final conclusions cannot and should not be viewed as any final or absolute commentary about who these individuals are or what changes they will undergo in the future.

In the process of collecting narrative accounts, this researcher noted that some participants who had a dismissing attachment style minimized, or eliminated entirely, the discussion of attachment-related experience. "The dismissing category is assigned . . . [when] the speaker's state of mind seems to indicate an attempt to limit the influence of attachment relationships in thought, in feeling, or in daily life" (Hesse, 1999, p. 401).

Although this defensive cognitive style was not unexpected among dismissing participants, it did limit the extent to which some accounts could be subject to narrative analysis.

One delimitation of this research project was to restrict the focus to Americans practicing a style of Zen that has been intentionally adapted to American culture. This allowed for a representation of participants raised in the climate of self-contained individualism, but a cross-cultural sample of participants may have offered a more in-depth view of how cultural differences in the organization and expression of self, as well as religious frameworks, influence the autobiographical components of internal working models.

A second delimitation of the study was that all participants were Caucasian, and most were heterosexual. For American Zen Buddhists, that disproportion in representation by ethnicity typifies an extreme lack of diversity among lay practitioners, and it must be considered a delimitation in this work. Other variables, such as socioeconomic status and level of education, were not assessed. Based on this delimitation, as well as the fact of a small sample size, the findings in this study may be difficult to generalize.

#### *Researcher Bias*

I was raised in the Bible Belt, where a socially conservative evangelical Protestantism dominated much of the culture. While my parents were part of a minority of individuals who did not believe in organized religion, my closest friends attended church regularly. This upbringing left me with a somewhat negative perspective on Christianity, and, for 12 years, I have been practicing Zen Buddhism. I was drawn to the

field of transpersonal psychology because of my interest in East Asian religious systems, and it is without doubt true that I began this research project with a favored bias toward Zen Buddhism. Through the process of conducting this research, however, I was deeply moved by the accounts shared with me by the Christian participants in this study. Their willingness openly to share their stories, as well as their sincerity and deep desire to be of service and extend love toward others, caused me dramatically to reconsider certain unfounded judgments and assumptions I had carried. Their participation in my study helped me to perceive the importance of all religious frameworks—not merely of those based in the contemplative traditions. Although Americans have adapted a socially and politically engaged component to Buddhist practice in the United States, the results of this study suggest that following the Christian ethic of selfless service would be of benefit for many lay Zen Buddhists practitioners, myself included.

#### *Future Research*

The first portion of this section is a summary and elaboration of improvements that could strengthen this study. The second portion suggests potential future research endeavors. In terms of participant selection, individuals who maintained a Zen Buddhist practice and individuals who had any other, or no, religious affiliation were invited to participate. This study may have been strengthened, however, if the researcher had instead established a control group composed of individuals who adhered to a single religious tradition, such as Christianity. The inclusion of a third group of individuals who did not ascribe to any religious beliefs would also have strengthened the comparative power of the study. This would have created more coherence in groups and allowed for enhanced comparison between groups, as would a larger sample size have done.

Several questions were asked of participants during the demographic interview that, if reformulated, may have provided valuable information leading to more definitive results. For example, the researcher asked whether participants' parents had been divorced during their childhood. A more useful question, however, might have been to inquire as to the overall quality of the parents' marriage, for many individuals remain in unhappy and tumultuous marriages for a multitude of reasons, and this sometimes occurs to the detriment of themselves and their children. In addition to asking if participants underwent specific negative attachment-related experiences, another useful inquiry may have included having participants rate what they perceived to be their overall level of emotional distress as children. Also, it would have been of benefit to question whether participants had endured stressful experiences outside of familial relationship, such as profound childhood illness or frequent relocation, for this may have had bearing on attachment styles. Finally, questions regarding previous therapy experience, mental illness, and substance use were not stated in a manner direct enough to be an effective screening tool. It would have been of benefit to ask participants about these issues in a more straightforward manner.

Furthermore, in this study, one measure of adult attachment was used to classify the attachment styles of all participants. Although the *Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Adult Attachment Questionnaire* is shown to have high levels of both reliability and validity, the study would have been strengthened by the use of additional attachment measures, such as those that measure relationship and marital satisfaction. The use of additional questionnaires would have provided supplementary means of evaluating the attachment classifications of participants.



In terms of the *Researcher-Developed Questionnaire*, many participants had difficulty responding to questions about profound experiences that radically transformed how they view themselves, others, and their childhood memories. Most participants responded by stating that they could not pinpoint single events that caused shifts in perception, because it had been an accumulation of dedicated practice and service that had been most transformative. This response, independently and spontaneously repeated by several interviewees, had a significant bearing on the perspective of the researcher, inasmuch as I came to perceive more clearly the value of continued participation in religious affairs versus seeking the significance of singular, transformative spiritual experiences.

As it was being conducted, this research project raised a number of other questions for the researcher that may be interesting areas of future investigation. For example, to what degree are autobiographical memories of significance to the self among Americans and those in other cultures? How does the psychological attachment process operate in Kirkpatrick's (1999) religion-as-attachment model in religious practices that lack a central creator deity? Are there specific religious frameworks that allow individuals cognitively to reframe negative events, or do all organized religious practices have this effect? In a cross-cultural comparison, what are the differences between the autobiographical narratives of American and Japanese Zen students? These are a few questions that may be interesting areas for future research projects.

### *Conclusion*

As an individual who ascribes to and supports the vision of transpersonal psychology, I based this research project on the notion that a specific technique—

meditation—may transform deep unconscious patterning originating in childhood patterns of attachment. Although this may occur for some individuals, the outcome of this work implies that it is the culmination of continued participation in organized religious belief systems, and not discrete events, that result in meaningful transformation. As a transpersonalist, I remain convinced of the central importance that religion and spirituality have, not only in the psychological paradigm but in the life of all human beings. It is my hope that this research endeavor might contribute to the transpersonal commitment of continuing in our efforts to assert the importance of spirituality and the religious traditions of the world for the health of the collective human psyche.

*May all beings be well.*

*May all beings be happy.*

*May all beings be at peace.*

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Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer, Zen Buddhist

# Are you a Zen Buddhist?

## **Men and women (40+ years old) needed for a study on the long-term effects of Zen Buddhist practice!**

If you have been involved in Zen Buddhist practice for at least one year, you are invited to participate in a research project. This study explores the relationship between certain religious practices and childhood experiences. The results of this study may help religious teachers work more effectively with religious practitioners. It may also help religious practitioners better understand some of their experiences and their responses to certain life events.

### PARTICIPATION INVOLVES:

- Completion of a 10-minute *confidential* online survey that can be completed from any computer with an active internet connection
- For qualifying participants, a 1-hour *confidential* interview that will be conducted in person or by telephone
- A free copy of the transcribed interview
- A free copy of the results of the research project

For more information and to sign up, please contact Jennifer Wilson at 999-999-9999 or e-mail [wilson.jennym@gmail.com](mailto:wilson.jennym@gmail.com)

# Research Participants Wanted!

**Men and women (40+ years old) with any, all,  
or no religious background are needed for a  
study on childhood memories!**

You are invited to take part in a study exploring the relationship between certain religious practices and childhood experiences. Participants from any and all faiths are welcome, as are atheists and agnostics. Identification with any religious or spiritual practice is not needed in order to participate.

## PARTICIPATION INVOLVES:

- Completion of a 10-minute *confidential* online survey that can be completed from any computer with an active internet connection
- For qualifying participants, a 1-hour *confidential* interview that will be conducted in-person or by telephone
- A free copy of the transcribed interview
- A free copy of the results of the research project

For more information and to sign up, please contact Jennifer Wilson at 999-999-9999 or e-mail [wilson.jennym@gmail.com](mailto:wilson.jennym@gmail.com)

## Appendix C: Demographic Information and Screening Questionnaire

**This form will be completed by the examiner during a one-to-one telephone or in-person interview with participant. This information is strictly confidential.**

Name: (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

Day, evening, work, cell phone numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth? \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ Age? \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth? \_\_\_\_\_  
Mo/day/year

Gender \_\_\_\_\_ Sexual Orientation \_\_\_\_\_ Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_

Are you single, married, or in a long-term relationship? Please specify.

If you have been married more than once, please say how many times you have been married.

If married or in a long-term relationship, how many years has it been since you and your partner first became involved?

Did you lose a parent as a child? If so, what happened, and how old were you when this occurred?

Were you ever separated from one or both of your parents as a child for a long period of time? If so, what happened, and how old were you when this occurred?

Were your parents separated or divorced when you were a child? If so, what happened, and how old were you when this occurred?

Was one or both of your parents seriously ill for a length of time when you were a child? If so, what happened, and how old were you when this occurred?

Was one or both of your parents ever diagnosed with psychiatric illness when you were a child? If so, what illness, and how old were you when this occurred?

Were you or your siblings abused as a child?

How many siblings do you have?

Have you ever been in therapy? If so, for how long and why?

Were you born and raised in the United States?

Were your parents born and raised in the United States? If not, where were they born, and how long did they live there before coming to the United States?

Where did you grow up? If you lived in more than one place, please list the places where you lived and the years you lived there.

Have you lived in another country for a significant length of time?

If so, for how long?

Why were you there?

**For Zen Buddhists:**

How many years have you had a Buddhist meditation practice?

What does your Buddhist practice entail on a regular basis?

Do you meditate each day?

For what length of time do you meditate each day?

How many times a day do you meditate?

What form of meditation do you practice on a regular basis?

How often do you meet with a Zen Buddhist teacher?

Have you attended at least one retreat lasting a minimum of 5 days?

How many retreats have you attended?

Do you have any other spiritual practices? If so, could you briefly describe these?



**For non-meditators:**

What is your primary religious identification?

What does your religious practice consist of on a regular basis?

Are you currently practicing any form of meditation? If so, please describe.

Have you ever practiced a form of meditation on a regular basis?

If so, what forms of meditation do you/did you practice?

Do you have any other spiritual practices? If so, could you briefly describe these?

## Appendix D: Informed Consent Agreement: Volunteer Participants

### INFORMED CONSENT

To the Participants in This Research Project:

You are invited to take part in a study exploring the relationship between certain religious practices and childhood experiences. Specifically, this study explores what, if any, effect certain religious practices have on how individuals view their childhood caregivers and relationships with others. The results of this study may help religious teachers work more effectively with religious practitioners and may help religious practitioners better understand some of their experiences and how they respond to certain life events. It may also provide for participants the occasion for psychological insight and spiritual opening. Participation is both VOLUNTARY and CONFIDENTIAL.

You will first be asked to complete a 10-minute online survey from any computer with internet access. This survey is a 36-item measure with items on a 7-point Likert scale rated *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*. Some participants will then be asked to meet with the researcher in a confidential one-on-one meeting at a neutral location and mutually convenient time. At this meeting, you will be asked to complete two surveys, and your responses to these surveys will be tape-recorded. For the first survey, you will be asked to describe your experience in response to three open-ended essay-format questions. This survey will take no more than 30 minutes to complete. For the second survey, you will be asked to respond to four open-ended essay-format questions regarding your religious practice, and this will take no more than 30 minutes to complete. In all, the meeting is estimated to last no more than 1 hour.

All tape-recorded responses are confidential, and an outside transcriber will not be used for transcription.

Although this study is designed to minimize potential risks, there is always a possibility that the interview may bring to mind memories that may be difficult to discuss. In some cases, discussion of childhood memories may cause anxiety, depression, fear, or other intense reactions; particularly for individuals who were abused as children. If distressing memories or emotional reactions arise, I will provide you with referrals to mental health professionals. If you wish to discuss spiritual issues that may arise, I will provide you with referrals to individuals trained as spiritual guides.

You may withdraw from this study at any time, for any reason. Participation is completely voluntary and withdrawal information will not be tracked. You may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or prejudice. All information you provide is confidential and anonymous. At no time will your first or last names be used on any written, audio, or electronic documents in this research. You

will, instead, be assigned a pseudonym. The key to the pseudonym and all recorded interviews, completed questionnaires, and other materials related to this research will be kept in a separate locked file in the researcher's home. No one else will have access to these materials. Contact data for the mailing or e-mailing of any information will be kept in a password-protected computer database until the end of the research project. After that time, all information in paper, computer, and audio format will be kept in a locked storage cabinet for approximately 7 years before being destroyed. In addition, in reporting on this study in any publication, any information that might identify participants will be altered to ensure anonymity.

Thank you for helping to add valuable information to the assessment of and clinical literature on attachment. You may request that a free copy of your responses to the online survey be sent to you. You may also request that a free general summary of all research findings for this study be sent to you. If you qualify for and choose to participate in the 1-hour interview, a free transcribed copy of your interview will be sent to you if you so request. Please indicate which, if any, of the following you would like by circling "yes" below, and a copy of any or all of these will be mailed or e-mailed to you.

I attest that I have read and understood this form, and that any questions I have about this study have been answered by the researcher to my satisfaction. ***I agree that no pressure has been applied to encourage my participation, and I understand and agree to voluntary participation in this research project.***

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Thank you, sincerely, for participating in this personally and professionally valued research project.

Do you want to receive of free copy of your responses to the online survey?

Yes No

Do you want to receive a free general summary of the research findings for the study?

Yes No

If you participate in an interview, would you like a free transcribed copy of your interview?

Yes No

Researcher:

Jennifer Margaret Wilson, wilson.jennym@gmail.com, (999) 999-9999

Dissertation Committee Chairperson:

Jenny Wade, Ph.D., jwadephd@yahoo.com

Research Ethics Committee Chairperson:

Fred Luskin, Ph.D., fluskin@itp.edu

Appendix E: The Revised Experiences in Close Relationships (*ECR-R*) Self-Report  
Measure of Adult Romantic Attachment

Developed by Fraley, Waller, and Brennan (2000).

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The statements below concern how you feel in emotionally intimate relationships. We are interested in how you *generally* experience relationships, not just in what is happening in a current relationship. Respond to each statement by circling a number to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement. 1=*strongly disagree* and 7=*strongly agree*.

1. I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love.

strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   strongly agree

2. I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me.

strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   strongly agree

3. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me.

strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   strongly agree

4. I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.

strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   strongly agree

5. I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him or her.

strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   strongly agree

6. I worry a lot about my relationships.

strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   strongly agree

7. When my partner is out of sight, I worry that he or she might become interested in someone else.

strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   strongly agree

8. When I show my feelings for romantic partners, I'm afraid they will not feel the same about me.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

9. I rarely worry about my partner leaving me.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

10. My romantic partner makes me doubt myself.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

11. I do not often worry about being abandoned.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

12. I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

13. Sometimes romantic partners change their feelings about me for no apparent reason.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

14. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

15. I'm afraid that once a romantic partner gets to know me, he or she won't like who I really am.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

16. It makes me mad that I don't get the affection and support I need from my partner.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

17. I worry that I won't measure up to other people.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

18. My partner only seems to notice me when I'm angry.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

19. I prefer not to show my partner how I feel deep down.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

20. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

21. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

22. I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

23. I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

24. I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

25. I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

26. I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

27. It's not difficult for me to get close to my partner.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

28. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

29. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

30. I tell my partner just about everything

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

31. I talk things over with my partner.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

32. I am nervous when partners get too close to me.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

33. I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

34. I find it easy to depend on romantic partners.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

35. It's easy for me to be affectionate with my partner.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

36. My partner really understands me and my needs.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree



## Appendix F: Modified Self-Defining Memory Questionnaire

### Self-Defining Memory Questionnaire

Adapted from Singer & Moffitt (1991-1992) and Thorne & McLean (2001).

I am going to read you a description of what a self-defining memory is. After I read you this description, I am going to ask you to provide three different self-defining memories. Please provide a **caption** or a **one-sentence summary** for each of the **three self-defining memories**. Then describe each memory with enough detail so that an imagined friend could see and feel as you did. State your age at the time of the event, who you were with, what happened, and how you and any others present responded to the event. I would then like you to tell me how you feel in the present after you have finished telling each of the self-defining memories. I will provide these instructions again, each time, before you begin telling a self-defining memory.

To understand best what a self-defining memory is, imagine you have just met someone you like very much, and you are going on a long walk together. You are committed to helping the other person know what things were like for you as a child, so that they can better understand who you have become as an adult. In the course of the conversation, you describe several childhood memories that you feel will most powerfully convey how you have come to be the person you are. It is precisely these memories that constitute self-defining memories.

A self-defining memory is a personal memory that has the following attributes:

1. It is a memory of a specific event in your childhood that involves you and one or both of your parents or caregivers that you remember very clearly and that still feels important to you even as you think about it now.
2. It is a memory that helps you to understand who you are as an individual and might be the memory you would tell someone else if you wanted that person to understand you in a more profound way.
3. It may be a memory that is positive or negative, or both, in how it makes you feel. The only important aspect is that it leads to strong feelings.

It is a memory that you have thought about many times. It should be familiar to you, like a picture you have studied or a song (happy or sad) you have learned by heart.

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Singer, J. A., & Moffitt, K. H. (1991-1992). An experimental investigation of specificity and generality in memory narratives. *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality*, *11*(3), 233-257.

Thorne, A., & McLean, K. C. (2001). Manual for coding events in self-defining memories. Retrieved August 5, 2007, from <http://people.ucsc.edu/~avril/PDFs/Pdf.10.pdf>

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Task:

You will be asked to provide three different self-defining memories. Please provide a **caption** or a **one-sentence summary** for each of the **three self-defining memories** that come to mind. Then describe each memory with enough detail to help your imagined friend see and feel as you did. State your age at the time of the event, who you were with, what happened, and how you and any others present responded to the event.

**Memory # 1**

Caption \_\_\_\_\_  
(a brief sentence to identify the event)

My age at the time of the original event \_\_\_\_\_

Other/person/persons involved in the event \_\_\_\_\_

Description of the event: where you were, who you were with, what happened, how you and others reacted. Include details that will help an imagined friend see and feel as you did.

How are you feeling now?

**Memory # 2**

Caption \_\_\_\_\_  
(a brief sentence to identify the event)

My age at the time of the original event \_\_\_\_\_

Other/person/persons involved in the event \_\_\_\_\_

Description of the event: where you were, who you were with, what happened, how you and others reacted. Include details that will help an imagined friend see and feel as you did.

How are you feeling now?

**Memory # 3**

Caption \_\_\_\_\_

(a brief sentence to identify the event)

My age at the time of the original event \_\_\_\_\_

Other/person/persons involved in the event \_\_\_\_\_

Description of the event: where you were, who you were with, what happened, how you and others reacted. Include details that will help an imagined friend see and feel as you did

How are you feeling now?

### Appendix G: Researcher-Developed Questionnaire for Zen Buddhists

I am going to read you four questions. I would like you to answer these questions as openly and honestly as you can.

1. In what ways, if any, do the self-defining memories you just provided affect your life in the present?
  
2. Have you ever had a profound experience in meditation or otherwise that has radically transformed how you view the memories you just described or other childhood memories? If so, can you describe this experience and how it affected you?
  
3. Have you ever had a profound experience in meditation or otherwise that has radically transformed how you relate to others and/or how you view yourself? If so, can you describe this experience and how it affected you?
  
4. Have you found your Buddhist practice causes you to be challenged with respect to certain psychological or emotional difficulties?

#### Appendix H: Researcher-Developed Questionnaire for Non-Buddhists

I am going to read you four questions. I would like you to answer these questions as openly and honestly as you can.

1. In what ways, if any, do the self-defining memories you just provided affect your life in the present?
  
2. Have you ever had a profound experience that has radically transformed how you view the memories you just described or other childhood memories? If so, can you describe this experience and how it affected you?
  
3. Have you ever had a profound experience that has radically transformed how you relate to others and/or how you view yourself? If so, can you describe this experience and how it affected you?
  
4. What area(s) of your life, if any, cause you to be challenged with respect to certain psychological or emotional difficulties?