PRACTICE AND COMMUNITY AT COMPASSIONATE DHARMA CLOUD MONASTERY

AN HONORS THESIS

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Fiona Horner

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Approved: ___________________________________

Date: _______________________________________

ON MY HONOR I HAVE NEITHER GIVEN NOR RECEIVED UNAUTHORIZED AID ON THIS HONORS THESIS.

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Fiona Horner

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ABSTRACT

Buddhist practice in the United States has grown and developed immensely since it's first introduction a hundred and thirty years ago. Previously practiced only by Asian immigrants for whom Buddhism was part of their home culture, the tradition is now practiced by millions of Americans of many cultures, and has developed into it's own distinct Western form. Using a synthesis of Bourdieu and Wenger's theories regarding practice and cultural reproduction, this paper analyzes one Buddhist center, Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery, located in Morrison, Colorado. Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery offers a unique point of study in that it is divided into two distinct communities that practice differently, yet side by side. A close examination and comparison of practice in these communities offers insight into the myriad forms of Buddhism present in the United States, and illuminates the diversity of people who seek spiritual guidance from this ancient tradition.

KEY WORDS: Buddhism, cultural reproduction, community of practice, social, learning, Wenger, Bourdieu

I. INTRODUCTION

The presence of Buddhism in the United States dates back only a century and a half, but in that short time, this ancient tradition has expanded and developed in a remarkable way. About 4 million Buddhists currently practice in the United States (Britannica 2014:324), only 800,000 of which converted from a different religion (Williams and Queen 1999: xv). This indicates that the remaining 3.2 million American Buddhists practice as part of a greater cultural heritage or ethnic identity brought from Asia, recently or in the distant past. Therefore, no study of Buddhism in the United States is complete without taking into account the religious and cultural influences of these individuals' country of origin. Yet with approximately 49,900 Americans converting to Buddhism each year (Britannica 2014:324), Buddhism in the United States is moving beyond the status of an imported religion brought to the country through immigration, and is evolving into its own unique form through the interactions and shared practices of Asian American Buddhists and convert Buddhists. Sociology and religion scholar James William Coleman explains: "A new Buddhism is now emerging in the industrialized nations of the West. This Buddhism is fundamentally different from anything that has gone before, yet, in the best tradition of Buddhist logic, it remains at its core completely unchanged from the moment of Siddhartha Gautama's great realization under the Bodhi tree" (Coleman 2001:3).

This study observes closely one such instance of this American Buddhism in practice. Looking at Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery (CDCM), we see not only the clear difference between Asian American Buddhists and convert Buddhists, but also the interrelationships and similarities between the two. At this single sacred place, distinct communities exist side by side, unified in beliefs yet divided by practice and cultural heritage.

By observing the unique practices and cultural reproduction at CDCM, the divergent role of Buddhism for each group becomes clear, as do the differing spiritual and social needs of each.

Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery (CDCM)

Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery is a Vietnamese-American Buddhist monastery located outside of Morrison, Colorado. Established in 2006, the monastery is home to between one and four monks at any given time, and serves as an important cultural center for Buddhists in the surrounding area. While its founder, Thay Tinh Man, was initially trained in the Pure Land tradition of Buddhism in Vietnam, CDCM approaches Buddhist practice in America with a broader, more holistic attitude to provide for the needs of its American practitioners. It offers a particularly interesting point of study in comparing its two distinct sanghas – Vietnamese- and English-speaking – that it serves. The word sangha refers to a group of Buddhists, and can be used to indicate the entirety of the community, including monastics and laity, or can describe a more specific section of the group. For the purpose of this paper, I will use sangha to refer to the laity that practices at CDCM. This center stands apart from other Buddhist centers in the area in that its laity is distinctly divided between the Vietnamese sangha and the English sangha. These two groups very rarely overlap, and CDCM provides each with a different function and method of practice, offered side by side and taught by the same monks. This diversity of purpose and practice illustrates the divergent spiritual and community needs of each sangha, and exemplifies the myriad adaptations that Buddhism has undergone in America. It should be noted that, in identifying the sanghas as either Vietnamese or English, I am referring to the primary language used by the group during their Buddhist practice. This distinction is used at CDCM, and I do not mean to imply that the Vietnamese Sangha represents Vietnamese Buddhism while the English

Sangha represents American Buddhism. Both sanghas are comprised of American Buddhists, albeit with differing cultural backgrounds, and their varying practices should be interpreted and analyzed as such.

In Pure Land Buddhism, the tradition most commonly practiced by lay people in Vietnam (Topmiller 2000:263), the individual focuses on cultivating good merit in order to be born into the Pure Land of the Amitabha Buddha – only there will one become enlightened. Practice in this tradition focuses on recitation of the name of the Buddha or of certain sutras (teachings directly from the Buddha), a custom known as *nien-fo* (Gethin 1998:263). At CDCM, the influence of Pure Land Buddhism is unmistakable, but the monastery also incorporates other forms of Buddhism in a conscious effort to provide for as many individuals as possible. Most notably, there is a strong Zen (also known as Chan or Thien) influence. The monastery is closely affiliated with Plum Village in France, home of Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, whose Zen teachings lie central to practice at Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery.

This association with Thich Nhat Hanh should be emphasized, as it is a crucial factor in drawing such a diverse range of practitioners to the center. World-renowned peace activist and founder of the Unified Buddhist Church, Thich Nhat Hanh was nominated by Martin Luther King Jr. for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967. He has written extensively on his Buddhist teachings, and has established multiple sanghas in which to teach, his home base being Plum Village in France (Maida 1997). He has dedicated much of his life to traveling around the world to spread his teachings, collectively termed “The Art of Mindful Living”, and many members of the sangha at CDCM have attended his lectures or retreats. The Western audience tends to connect more closely with Thich Nhat Hanh’s teachings than with those of other Buddhist masters, and his influence at CDCM has undoubtedly widened the monastery’s network of practitioners.

Members of the English sangha who I interviewed repeatedly pointed out Thich Nhat Hanh's slightly altered or unusual approach to Buddhism, and explained how they felt significantly more connected to his way of practice than with other teachings (Laura McNeely, Elise Jones, and Kaylie Williams, personal interview, Sept 2014). His emphasis on engaged Buddhism and daily integration of mindfulness resonates well with Westerners, as he does not promote a strict practice of renunciation of Western life. Instead, his teachings have a down-to-earth, approachable feel to them, an aspect very attractive to Western practitioners (Laura McNeely and Elise Jones, personal interview, Sept 2014).

Unfortunately, Thich Nhat Hanh suffered a severe brain hemorrhage during my research, an event that deeply influenced and saddened CDCM and sanghas around the world. As an observer of the community during this upsetting event, it was enlightening and touching to see the two sanghas come together to pray for the renowned spiritual leader and follow his recovery. After several months in a coma, Thich Nhat Hanh recently woke up and continues to slowly recover.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

History of Buddhism in the United States

Buddhism's history in the West, although relatively short, offers key insight into the religion's growth and development in the United States, illuminating how and why this ancient tradition has been adapted and morphed into its current state. The World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in 1893, is generally cited as Buddhism's initial introduction into the West when the first of the traditional lineages made its debut. However, it might be more accurate to push

the real date of contact much earlier. As Goldberg argues, the Buddhism that reached the United States during the World Parliament was one already influenced and altered by English translators who Orientalized Buddhism, and reduced the tradition into text. This essentialization and textualization, two stages of Edward Said's Orientalism (Said 1978), drastically changed the Buddhism that reached Americans in 1893 by ignoring much of the important ritual and mythology central to the tradition, and attempting to condense it down to a single doctrine. Indeed, "North American contact with Buddhism is derived first from European sources," (Goldberg 1999: 343), resulting in an inherent conceptual rift in Westerner's understanding of the tradition that stemmed from the Christian-influenced worldview pervasive in the United States and Europe. "The term 'Buddhism'," explains Virtbaur, "like other Asian-isms (Hinduism, Jainism, etc) is a Western construct. It can be traced back to the beginnings of systematic religions studies, when the Western Christian religious world began to superimpose more specific descriptions onto foreign systems, which addressed the human predicament within the cosmos" (Virtbaur 2012:252).

This difference in worldviews between the East and West has continued to raise issues in the spread of Buddhism. For early nineteenth century Christian thinkers, the thought of a godless religion with no immortal soul was preposterous – indeed much of the first interaction between Buddhism and the West was in polemic, with Buddhists defending the validity of their religion (Coleman 2001, Lopez 2008). Lopez notes that this initial argument was one of the first contributing factors that linked Buddhism with science. In attempting to give Buddhism legitimacy, Buddhists emphasized its objectivity and systematic approach, arguing against Christian missionaries "that their religion [was] not superstition but science" (Lopez 2008:xi). This, combined with the reduction of Buddhism into texts that Westerners could understand,

caused sentiment surrounding the religion to quickly change. People began to see Buddhism "as a more tolerant, more rational alternative to Christianity" (Coleman 2001:7), and interest in this new and exotic religion rose, especially among the intellectual community who studied from an academic, rather than spiritual, standpoint (Lenoir 1999:100-101). Lopez notes that Buddhism was actually referred to as "the scientific study of Buddhism" during this time, and "it was this Western science, fueled by the study of dead languages, that built a Buddha whose teachings could be compatible with science" (Lopez 2008:154).

Following the World Parliament of Religions, a number of key figures emerged who continued this trend towards essentializing and Orientalizing Buddhism. Aiming to make the religion attractive to the West, these key teachers such as Soyen Shaku, Anagarika Dharmapala, and D.T. Suzuki celebrated Buddhism's lack of creed or mandated belief, describing it as "free from theology, priestcraft, rituals, ceremonies, dogmas, heavens, hells and other theological shibboleths" (Lopez 2008:15). Although these teachers were from various parts of Asia, they understood the necessity of altering Buddhism so as to make it accessible to the West. Highlighting the rationality and philosophy of the religion, Shaku, Dharmapala and Suzuki gained many American followers. Dharmapala was particularly adamant about the connection between Buddhism and science, and explained Buddhism as "a scientific religion containing the highest individualistic altruistic ethics, a philosophy of life built on psychological mysticism and a cosmogony which is in harmony with geology, astronomy, radioactivity, and relativity," (Dharmapala in Lopez 2008:15). This sentiment has evolved and grown during the time since Dharmapala, forwarded by such important figures as the Chinese Buddhist activist Taixu and the Dalai Lama, both of whom have taught that science can prove the truths of the Buddhist doctrine, but cannot lead mankind to ultimate truth on its own (Lopez 2008:34, 18). While this connection

to science undoubtedly made Buddhism more accessible and legitimate for Westerners, it contributed to the further essentialization of the religion. As Lopez explains, “In order to make this “Buddhism” compatible with “Science,” Buddhism must be severely restricted, eliminating much of what had been deemed essential…to the exalted monks and ordinary laypeople who have gone for refuge to the Buddha over the course of more than two thousand years” (Lopez 2008:864).

Lopez’s words raise the unavoidable question of whether or not this new, scientific and Westernized Buddhism can in fact be considered the same tradition. Have Americans strayed too far from ‘original Buddhism’ in their attempt to over-rationalize an ancient tradition? The very concept of an ‘original’ or ‘real’ Buddhism is itself problematic, for the history of the tradition is characterized by its ability to adapt to new regions, cultures, and spiritual needs. Indeed, Buddhism no longer exists in India, the place of its birth; European attempts to recreate or fully understand the Buddhism once practiced in India relied solely on archaeology and religious texts (Lopez 2008:5). Thus, by necessity, the religion has adapted into distinct lineages in the other major places of its modern-day practice: Therevāda in Southeast Asia, Mahāyāna in East Asia, and Vajrayāna or Tantric Buddhism in Tibet, all of which internally contain further diversity of practice and philosophy (Gethin 1998:1-2; Smith 2007:309). When Buddhism was first introduced to the West, it brought with it this understanding that multiple Buddhisms exist, each as legitimate as the others (Lopez 2008:5). This mindset has allowed for the expansion and adaptation of the religion as it finds its place in this new home, and opens up the possibility that Western Buddhism might develop – if it has not done so already – into its own distinct Buddhist tradition.

Looking at Buddhism in America today, we see a huge diversity of Buddhist traditions, practice, and practitioners. Smith's survey of 231 American Buddhist centers found 31 different forms of Buddhism present in the United States, a number which represents only self-reported Buddhist centers – there may well be many more. Additionally, 11.7 percent of respondents reported multiple identification, where centers practiced more than one type of Buddhism, and 31 percent of organizations had members from more than one country. This illustrates the adaptation and variety inherent in modern-day practice of Western Buddhism, and Smith concludes that "a significant number of Buddhist organizations are not composed purely of first generation immigrants or recent American converts" (Smith 2007:311). Buddhism in America has thus transcended initial stages of introduction, and has started developing into its own form.

When it comes to the study of ethnic Buddhist groups in America, existing scholarship emphasizes Japanese practitioners over any other nationality. This makes sense considering that Japan is the second most common country of origin for American Buddhists, after the United States (Smith 2007:311). We see this exemplified clearly in Kashmina's *Buddhism in America*. Here, he analyzes the history of Japanese immigrants in America and discusses how this complex past has caused Japanese-American Buddhist practice to serve as means of maintaining traditional Japanese culture and establishing a sense of place in a historically hostile environment. Similarly, Machacek compares two of the largest Japanese Buddhist groups in America, Soka Gakkai International-USA and Buddhist Churches of America, discussing the different approaches used by each as they acclimated to Western culture.

Despite the fact that Vietnam comes in as the third most common country of origin for American Buddhists (Smith 2007:311), little scholarly attention has been directed towards this ethnic group's practice of Buddhism in the United States. Similar to Kashmina's study of

Japanese-American Buddhists, Vietnamese-American Buddhist practice may serve, in part, to maintain connections with practitioners' home culture. This seems especially likely considering the increased immigration from Vietnam to the United States caused by the Vietnam War (UNHCR 2000:84-99). Additionally, I could find no direct comparison between the communities of practice of culture Buddhists (those who practice Buddhism as part of their cultural heritage) and convert Buddhists (those who came to Buddhism from other religions and cultures) in the West. This research will begin to fill this gap, as Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery offers a unique interface between these two types of practitioners, and provides an insightful view into the continually developing world of American Buddhism.

History of Buddhism in Vietnam

In contrast to the very recent introduction of Buddhism to the United States, the religion's presence in Vietnam dates back nearly 2000 years, and the tradition is deeply entrenched in Vietnamese identity and culture. Reaching the country by way of China and India (Thien-An 1975:28), the Buddhism that would eventually be practiced in Vietnam integrated into its teachings a myriad of other beliefs during its expansion, particularly the Chinese influences of Taoism, Confucianism, and ancestor worship (Topmiller 2000:233). Thus, from the very beginnings of Vietnamese Buddhism, we see the tendency for adaptation and change tailored to fit the new populations' needs. The Mahāyāna ('Great Vehicle") tradition has historically dominated the region, which Thien-An connects to this tolerance of different beliefs. He describes the Mahāyāna school as "modernized and progressive" (Thien-An 1975:21), which, while maybe a strange description of a 2000 year-old practice, refers to the greater acceptance of the tradition when compared to the Theravāda (or Hinayana, 'Lesser Vehicle') tradition which

emphasizes conservation of tradition and strict discipline (Thien-An 1975:21). Thien-An notes "in Mahāyāna's engagement in the world the Buddhist Dharma takes different forms in accordance with circumstances and amalgamation with indigenous beliefs, an attribute which has allowed Buddhism of the Great Vehicle to penetrate the hearts of so many culturally varied ethnic peoples" (Thien-An 1975:22). Yet while the Vietnamese readily adapted Mahāyāna Buddhism, Theravāda also has a clear presence and strong influence over the region, particularly in the south. Both traditions are internally divided into a variety of different sects, and a plethora of Buddhisms are now practiced side by side (Thien-An 1975:24). "We may say, in short, that Buddhism in Vietnam is synthetic and unified, rather than divided and sectarian" (Thien-An 1975:24).

However, this unity or oneness of direction for the different forms of Vietnamese Buddhism has struggled at times, particularly concerning political action. Especially in the latter half of the twentieth century during the Vietnamese Buddhist movement, the disparate nature of Buddhism in the country led to conflict or disagreement regarding organizational efforts (Topmiller 2000:234). With the acceleration of the Vietnam War in 1964, Thich Nhat Hanh established the Unified Buddhist Church (UBC) in an attempt to "fashion an adequate association to carry out political and religious activities…[and] project a united voice opposing the war" (Topmiller 2000:234). Unfortunately, these efforts were not entirely successful, and factionalism only increased with the Communist takeover in 1975. Topmiller now identifies seven distinct sects of Buddhism in Vietnam: the Unified Buddhist Church; Chinese Buddhists; Vietnamese Theravāda Buddhists; Khmer Theravāda Buddhists; Hinayana Buddhists; Hoa Hao; and non-UBC Buddhists (Topmiller 2000:234).

Once in power, the Vietnamese Communist Party openly targeted Buddhist institutions by imprisoning prominent religious leaders, attacking temples, and shutting down religion-affiliated organizations such as orphanages. Threatened by the UBC and concerned about resistant efforts, the government established its own Buddhist church, entirely sponsored and controlled by the state (Topmiller 2000:235). Thich Quang Do, spiritual leader and long-time opponent of communism, argues that in this violently imposed puppet church, "monks oppress other monks," and the institution represents one of the most malicious insults to human rights put into practice by the VPC (Topmiller 2000:236). Thousands fled Vietnam after 1975 seeking peace, safety, and refuge from political and religious oppression. Seven hundred fifty thousand Vietnamese resettled between 1975 and 1995, 424,590 of which relocated to the United States (UNHCR 2000:85,99). These Vietnamese immigrants have put down roots in the U.S. and continue to practice their Buddhism, now free from religious oppression. For those who remain in Vietnam, "A few have chose outright defiance, some have engaged in silent protest while others have acquiesced in government dominance of religion by tacitly accepting state control," (Topmiller 2000:235).

Classifying Western Buddhism

We now see these two histories converging, as Vietnamese immigrants have settled in the United States and reestablished their Buddhist practice in the new environment of Western culture. As the religion grows and develops in the U.S., we are faced with the challenge of how to meaningfully classify the different forms that Buddhism now takes. Several attempts have been made to this end, each focusing on a different aspect of Buddhism to use as a distinguishing factor. David Machacek identifies the systems of classification put forth by Charles Prebish and

Jan Nattier as the most useful, yet points out shortcomings in each approach (Machacek 2001:64). He offers instead his own, four-part synthesis of their work as a comprehensive system in which to approach the diversity of Buddhism that we now see in America (Machacek 2001).

Looking first at Prebish and Nattier's work, we can interpret their systems of classification as coming from opposite sides of Buddhism as a religion – specifically, one represents the demand-side, and the other the supply-side of the practice of religion (Machacek 2001:66). An unusual approach to understanding spiritual practice, demand-side in this case asks who in the United States practices Buddhism – who has the need for it? In contrast, supply-side refers to how Buddhism is transmitted to Western practitioners. (It should be noted that, while Machacek, Prebish, and Nattier all focus on Buddhism, these classifications could apply just as accurately to other forms of religion brought to a new environment.) Prebish, using the demand-side approach, splits American Buddhists into three categories essentially divided by ethnicity, thus asking the question of who is practicing in the West. His first category, "Ethnic Buddhism," applies to Asian immigrants; the second, "Export Buddhism," pertains to American individuals who, finding interest in the religion, choose to convert; the third, "New Religious Buddhism," indicates the combination of the two, the development of a new tradition of Buddhism in America (Machacek 2001:65). However, this division suggests a qualitative difference between the Buddhisms practiced by Asian immigrants versus American converts, implying "on the one hand, American converts to Buddhism were somehow bastardizing the tradition, and, on the other hand, that immigrant Buddhists were practicing a religion that was not genuinely "American"" (Machacek 2001:65).

In contrast, Nattier approaches the question from the supply-side. Her classifications are not based on ethnicity, but rather on means of transmission. Thus, she distinguishes between

"Import Buddhism," which is actively sought out by Americans; "Export Buddhism," which is purposefully brought to America by missionaries; and "Ethnic Buddhism," which arrives as "cultural baggage" with immigrants from Asia (Machacek 2001:65-66). This system fails to account for variation in the Buddhism that is now developing in the United States, distinct from its Asian origins.

Machacek synthesizes these two approaches into a four-part model that takes both supply (religious heritage or proselytization) and demand (immigrant or American-born) into account, illustrated by Figure 1 below. This classification not only distinguishes between the myriad Buddhisms now present in the United States, but also predicts the development and growth of the religion over time. Looking at Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery in context of Machacek's categories thus offers interesting insight into the center's development and its role in Western Buddhism.

	SUPPLY-SIDE	
DEMAND-SIDE	*Heritage*	*Proselytization*
Immigrant	**1** **Traditional Buddhism**	**2** **Ethnic Buddhism**
American-born	**4** **Americanized Buddhism**	**3** **Convert Buddhism**

Figure 1: Machacek's model for the classification of American Buddhism (Machacek 2001)

In Cell 1, we see "Traditional Buddhism," indicating the Buddhism practiced by Asian immigrants who brought the religion with them to the United States. This describes several of the

monks at Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery, as well as the older members of the Vietnamese sangha. These are individuals who left Vietnam at a young age for reasons other than mission work, and who subsequently continued their practice when they reached the West. Cell 2 includes those who immigrated to the U.S. and converted to Buddhism upon arrival. Machacek notes that here, “ethnic identity rather than loyalty to a religious heritage becomes the motivating factor in participation.” (Machacek 2001:69). To my knowledge, this category was not represented at CDCM. Cell 3 covers American-born converts to Buddhism, represented by the adults of the English sangha at CDCM. Finally, Cell 4 describes those born in America to families or heritages already practicing Westernized Buddhism. Thus, the children of both sanghas would fall into this category, and it represents the future growth and divergence of American Buddhism from its strictly Asian roots.

Machacek’s system of classification illuminates the true complexity of Buddhism as it is now practiced in the United States. Far from being just an exotic, imported tradition, Americanized Buddhism (cell 4) has thoroughly established itself in the United States, exemplified by Buddhist centers and monasteries such as CDCM that cross the line between immigrant and American-born practitioners and between generations. CDCM navigates this new territory by dividing practice between Machacek’s Traditional and Convert Buddhisms. But as the children of each sangha grow up, developing with them this novel Americanized Buddhism, will this division remain? Machacek’s model suggests not, hypothesizing the synthesis of the English and Vietnamese sanghas into a unified community of practice. A current comparison of Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery sheds light on these changing dynamics of American Buddhism, offering insight into the function of Buddhism in the lives of its Western practitioners.

III. METHODOLOGY

This ethnographic study was conducted over a six-month period between August 2014 and January 2015 on site at Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery. Primary research techniques included in-depth review of literature, formal and informal interviews, participant observation, and background research on Buddhism started in September 2013.

My first several visits were spent observing, partaking in the Buddhist practice, and speaking with the monks (primarily Thich Quang Phap) about Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery as a whole. During the initial stages of research, I actually intended to compare CDCM to several other Buddhist centers in the Colorado Springs and Denver metro area. My original objective was to observe the different adaptations that varying centers had utilized to make their Buddhist practice compatible with American culture. I was particularly interested in how the presence of monastics affected Buddhist practice in the West. However, after visiting CDCM and witnessing its unique two-sangha structure, I shifted my research to focus solely on Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery. Using Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction and Wenger's community of practice approach, my observations and research center on the different practices of each sangha. Looking at social learning and the role of community, I explore how these elements lead to the production and reproduction of distinct cultures within each sangha.

Participants varied greatly between each visit, although several core members from each sangha were consistently present during my research. Thay Tinh Man estimated, based on CDCM's email list, that each sangha had almost 1,000 members. However, only 15-30 English sangha members, and 40-60 Vietnamese sangha members attended any given event or practice. Both sanghas were extremely welcoming and enthusiastically agreed to assist in my study. Participants travelled from a relatively large geographic range to the monastery, coming from

Denver, Aurora, Morrison, Evergreen, and surrounding area; for some, the commute was up to two hours. Interviewees represented a diverse group, with equal representation between English and Vietnamese sangha. Interviews were recorded on-site in the extra meditation room, and later transcribed.

The participation aspect of my research proved to be extremely informative, as I experienced first-hand the different modes of practice of each sangha. On days when I visited and practiced with the English sangha, my research went relatively unnoticed. However, on days of Vietnamese practice, my presence drew much attention, and individuals repeatedly came up to me to inform me when the English sangha met, assuming I had mistaken the day. The most noticeable difference between observing the Vietnamese and English sangha was, not unexpectedly, language. As services for the Vietnamese sangha are carried out entirely in Vietnamese, I did not understand the exact sutras and prayers chanted by the Vietnamese adults, and had to identify them immediately after observation with the assistance of one of the monks. Similarly, Vietnamese dharma talks required translation, graciously provided by Thay Tinh Man. This extra step in my research on the Vietnamese sangha may have slightly changed my observation and interpretation of their practice. To account for this potential bias, I also observed some services entirely in Vietnamese to get a feel for how their practice would flow without being interrupted to explain things to me in English.

IV. THEORY

Buddhism itself, while often categorized by Westerners as religion, is, at its heart, a practice. It is not one's belief in certain creeds or doctrines that identifies an individual as Buddhist, but rather one's daily practice of meditation, mindfulness, and compassionate living,

as one follows the path of the Buddha towards enlightenment. As such, a theoretical analysis of Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery must emphasize the distinct practices of each sangha. Prominent in anthropological practice theory is the work of Pierre Bourdieu, who focused on the transference of power and the communal practices and interactions that indirectly create and maintain social structure (Jenks 2005; Jenkins 1992). Looking ethnographically at Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery (CDCM), Bourdieu's theory offers important insight into the lives and practice of the American Buddhists who congregate in this sacred space. Interestingly, these concepts reflect many similarities to Wenger's later theory of Community of Practice (CoP) (Wenger 1998). The synthesis of these theories illustrates the myriad adaptations and strategies present at CDCM, and brings to light the living and constantly evolving American Buddhist tradition.

Bourdieu and Wenger's theories both reconcile human agency with the larger social structure in which the individual is embedded. As opposed to assigning power to one of these seemingly divergent forces, the two scholars recognize the intricate interplay between agency and structure, and understand each part as influencing the other. This point of view stems from Marx, who believed that "Men make their own history, but…under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past," (Marx, 1852). In both Wenger and Bourdieu, we see the centrality of practice theory in cultural reproduction. Practice operates simultaneously as a process of maintaining the current cultural state, and as a means for the individual to exercise this human agency. For Bourdieu, this is depicted in his concepts of habitus, field, and cultural capital, the interactions of which produce a place and means of cultural reproduction. The habitus broadly refers to the set of culturally or socially established norms that guide behavior, beliefs, values, and worldview within a certain culture. Individuals in a given society

internalize this cultural environment, unconsciously abiding by its behavioral guidelines. Cultural capital refers to the knowledge and understanding of these established cultural rules, and suggests status or command within the culture. This capital can be exchanged in the field, the spatial and temporal arena of cultural reproduction. For Wenger, who focused on social learning and the environments in which it takes place, we see very similar frameworks emerge. Wenger defines communities of practice as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly," (Wenger 1:2013). A crucial aspect of this theory is that a CoP shares a certain domain, much similar to Bourdieu's concept of field. We can compare the shared practices and beliefs within this domain to Bourdieu's habitus, and can interpret it as an arena in which the distribution of different kinds of symbolic capital can take place.

By synthesizing these two compatible frameworks for analysis of American Buddhist practice at Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery, the importance of both cultural reproduction and cultural adaptation (learning) become undeniably clear. This approach provides new application of the two theories, and draws important connections between Bourdieu's cultural reproduction and Wenger's social learning. In examining the two distinct sanghas at CDCM – the English speaking and the Vietnamese speaking – through this lens, we reach a more comprehensive analysis of practice. The two sanghas can be understood as unique communities of practice, each a specific habitus operating seamlessly alongside the other. The different values, behaviors, and interactions distinguish the two groups, but they are united by their shared goal: the Buddhist path.

Community of Practice (CoP) theory, developed in the 1990's, began as a theory of situated learning from cognitive anthropologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (Wenger 1998).

Looking at the methods of learning in apprenticeships, Lave and Wenger were drawn by the "complex set of social relationships through which learning takes place," (Wenger 3:2013) They quickly realized that these processes of learning existed everywhere, and they coined the term *community of practice* to describe the specific environment in which such practices occurred. In Wenger's words,

> Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human behavior… this… allows for, but does not assume, intentionality: learning can be the reason the community comes together or an incidental outcome of member's interactions. (Wenger 2013:1)

Wenger expanded upon this theory in his 1998 book, *Communities of Practice*, focusing on the significance of practice in society. "The concept of practice connotes doing, but not just doing in and of itself. It is doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do. In this sense, practice is always social practice." (Wenger 1998:47). Thus, practice is truly about the production and experience of meaning.

Central to the idea of a community of practice is that members share behaviors, values, and cultural capital, but do so in an environment of learning situated in a specific time and place. In order to interact, learn, and reproduce knowledge and culture, individuals must come together in an identifiable network. This doesn't necessarily have to be a physical interaction – plenty of communities of practice exist on the Internet or through other means of communication. However, Eckert (2006) recognizes that a shared experience over time and a commitment to shared understanding are crucial in the formation of a CoP. Additionally, communities of practice make up a central component of their participants' identity. They "…emerge in response to common interest or position, and play an important role in forming their members' participation in, and orientation to, the world around them" (Eckert 2006:1). Participants'

learning over time results in the reproduction of this shared sense of place or worldview, allowing for the continuation of the group. Through repeated actions and interactions, the CoP establishes its specific norms and expectations, essentially creating its own micro-culture embedded in the larger society.

Here, we see a direct correlation with much of Bourdieu's theory on cultural reproduction. He too saw practice as the key driving force behind culture, and his framework of 'field' describes the arena in which this process is carried out. Broadly, a field is where the exchange of any type of capital – material, cultural, social, etc. – takes place (Jenkins 1992:84). Looking at this in the context of a community of practice, we understand learning as an exchange of cultural capital itself. Thus, Wenger's notion of the 'domain' of a CoP, directly related to a certain time and place as discussed previously, exactly mirrors Bourdieu's field. The structure within each of these frameworks deserves mention as well. Referring to Bourdieu's field, Jenkins explains:

> A field, therefore, is a structured system of social positions…the nature of which defines the situation for their occupants. It is also a system of forces which exist between these positions; a field is structured internally in terms of power relations. (Jenkins 1992:85)

Again, we see direct correlation between this explanation of field, and the domain of a CoP. The different members of a community of practice will, depending on their level of learning, length of membership, or development within the group, possess different degrees of cultural capital. Their level of power and authority vary accordingly, and the community inevitably becomes stratified and internally structured.

Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery clearly operates as the field or domain for the two distinct sanghas that practice there. For the Vietnamese and English sangha alike, CDCM

serves as a specific location separate from the rest of the community, in which they purposefully can come together to practice their religion. It is not uncommon for a family or individual practitioner to travel several hours by car to the monastery's semi-remote location outside of Morrison, a fact that illustrates the conscious effort of members, as well as the unique function of the monastery. As both Bourdieu and Wenger note, the place in time of the field or community of practice is equally important as its physical location (Jenkins 1992:69; Wenger 1998:49). Again, CDCM exemplifies this. For the Vietnamese sangha, Buddhist practice stems from members' upbringing, usually in Vietnam, and carries strong associations with the culture of their families. Most Vietnamese practitioners came to the United States from Vietnam as small children (ages 6-10), and saw CDCM as an important way to teach their children – born and raised in American culture – their cultural roots (Long, personal interview, Sept 2014). As such, the field or domain of CDCM is dependent upon historical events and the past experiences of its members. The English sangha proves harder to situate in history. However, the current upsurge of interest in Buddhism and the fact that the entirety of the English sangha converted to Buddhism later in life clearly carries meaning. This may speak to the possibility that the spiritual environment in which American converts were raised, or to which they were previously exposed, proved insufficient in providing spiritual guidance or in answering questions regarding the nature of being. Machacek notes that "many attempts to understand the spread of "new religious movements" in the 1970s and 1980s also pointed to value change in the American public, which led to the demand for religions that appealed to nontraditional values" (Machacek 2001:66). I suggest that this change in values has continued into the present day, and that the American interest in Buddhism is closely related to the current political or cultural moment. I would be

very interested in pursuing this point in further studies to identify which values have in fact changed in recent years.

Perhaps Bourdieu's most well known theoretical concept, and one that again closely corresponds to Wenger's community of practice theory, is his concept of habitus. The habitus consists of a set of socialized norms or behaviors within a given culture that guide behavior and thinking. Beyond just the collective set of human behaviors in society, habitus emerged from Bourdieu's rejection of the binaries of structuralism and existentialism, and exists as a combination of key innovative, agency-driven practices, and standardized or structuralized norms. Jenkins explains that Bourdieu's "notion of the 'habitus' is a bridge building exercise across the explanatory gap between these two extremes [structuralism and existentialism], another important device for transcending the sterility of the opposition between subjectivism and optimism" (Jenkins 1992:74). In this sense, we can understand the habitus as the product of two powerful influences. On the one hand, human social practice is affected by the existing norms and standards of behavior already set into place by the overarching structure of society. On the other hand, the creative dispositions and inherent agency of the individual allow one to shape society, ensuring its continual production and reproduction. Thus, habitus is both a structured and a structuring force.

From a community of practice approach, the habitus represents the underlying, shared values and behaviors within a certain learning environment. These are the practices and ways of thinking exchanged as cultural capital in a CoP, and serve a vital role in the function and identity of the community. However, for Wenger, an important distinction exists from Bourdieu's theory. Discussing Bourdieu, Wenger explains,

> …practices are generated from an underlying structure, which he calls habitus. In my argument, the habitus would be an emerging property of

> interacting practices rather than their generative infrastructure, with an existence unto itself. (Wenger 1998:289)

This illuminates Wenger's willingness to grant the individual more agency, shifting the concept of habitus slightly more towards existentialism than originally intended by Bourdieu. While the latter insisted that habitus operates below the level of consciousness to influence and produce behavior, Wenger argues that participation in a community of practice could be conscious or unconscious.

The synthesis of Bourdieu and Wenger's theories provides a more comprehensive understanding of the practice taking place at Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery. The monastery essentially operates as a field or domain for social learning and cultural reproduction specific to the Buddhist path. The unique organization of two distinct sanghas operating side by side highlights how practice determines community, since different methods of learning exist to reproduce a unique subculture in each sangha. Members' participation in their specific field or domain is what truly distinguishes them from broader society and from the other sangha, situating them within their particular community of practice. The shared values and beliefs regarding Buddhist practice represent the habitus within CDCM and within each sangha; the habitus simultaneously influences and is influenced by members' behavior, creating a space of learning and cultural reproduction.

V. CULTURAL ANALYSIS

Looking at Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery, it is undeniably clear that the Vietnamese and English sanghas each have their own unique form of practice and cultural reproduction – their own habitus. The two groups come together under different circumstances, driven by different motivations, and their Buddhist practice differs accordingly. However, my

interviews again and again led me to the same place, regardless of who I was talking to: a sincere love of the Dharma and wish to live compassionately, following the way of the Buddha.

The organization and scheduling of events at CDCM ensures that Vietnamese and English practice occur at separate times. Sunday mornings serve as the weekly gathering time of the Vietnamese sangha, and include sutra chanting, a Dharma talk, and a shared vegetarian lunch. I was struck by the casual and friendly atmosphere during this time – with children running around playing, families chatting, people constantly coming and going, there was a sense of freedom and informality, and the social aspect of the sangha was clearly very important. The English sangha gathers every Tuesday evening for a Dharma talk, sitting meditation, chanting, dharma reading, and shared vegetarian dinner. In contrast to the social and chaotic atmosphere on Sundays, Tuesday nights feel quiet and contemplative. I never witnessed any English sangha members bring their children to the monastery, although I was told that this does happen on occasion, especially for larger events or celebrations. Both sanghas engage in silent and speaking Days of Mindfulness once per month, but these are again separated by sangha. Similarly, retreats are held at different times for the two groups, but generally follow the same schedule.

For the Vietnamese sangha, Buddhist practice is deeply integrated with maintaining cultural roots and passing Vietnamese cultural heritage on to the members' children. As previously noted, the adults of the Vietnamese sangha were all born in Vietnam, having immigrated to the United States at a young age, immediately following the Vietnam War. Having lived the vast majority of their lives in the United States, these individuals sought out Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery as a place to stay connected to their past. It is worth noting, then, that while all members of the Vietnamese sangha are perfectly fluent in English, they choose to practice in Vietnamese, again illustrating the strong cultural connection to their

practice. The uniformity of age within the Vietnamese sangha is quite noticeable. Although I did not collect quantitative data regarding age, I saw through interviews and observation that the average Vietnamese family at CDCM consisted of parents in their forties, who brought their school-aged children each week to learn and practice. Weekly Sunday practice included an hour of Vietnamese language class for the children, and all of the parents to reported that this was an important aspect of CDCM. It was interesting to observe the Vietnamese children running around the monastery playing, speaking to each other in perfect, unaccented English, while their parents conversed entirely in Vietnamese. While all of the Vietnamese adults spoke English as well, their accents pointed to the fact that it was their second language. Children and adults both reported that they use primarily Vietnamese at home, yet I observed parents speak to their children in Vietnamese only to have their kids respond in English. This code switching on the part of the Vietnamese children illuminates their further integration into American culture, and suggests a step towards Machacek's fourth category of Americanized Buddhism.

The Vietnamese sangha proved very self-aware of their differences from the English sangha. Many of them made the distinction between a religion inherited and a religion converted to, and understood this on a deeper level than I. Tung, who came to the U.S. from Vietnam at 16 and now brings his children to CDCM each week, was especially emphatic about this. He described the difference as starting with a belief versus starting with knowledge. For the Vietnamese, and any Asian Americans who practice Buddhism as part of their cultural heritage, Buddhism is introduced at such a young age that one cannot fully comprehend the teachings or meaning behind their practice. Attending the temple each week with their entire family, they must instead begin by simply believing in what they do – believing in the way of the Buddha. Only later do they grow into the full understanding of the dharma. In contrast, those who convert

to Buddhism are first drawn by the intellectual or philosophical teachings of the tradition. Intrigued by the messages of the dharma and by the meditation practice, they devote themselves to Buddhist teachings, and later grow into the full belief side of the religion (Tung Yo, personal interview, Dec 2014). Another interviewee, Long, agreed with this view. Reflecting on his own experience growing up in Vietnam,

> I didn't really understand Buddhism until recently, when I really got into the dharma more. Before, I just kind of believed in Buddhism, like you just go in and pray to a statue with incense and stuff like that, but I didn't really understand the philosophy, the deeper meaning behind that, even though I was raised a Buddhist. I just remember going to the temple with my mom when I was a kid, just the way I take my kids now. (personal interview, Sept 2014)

For Long, it doesn't matter that his children do not grasp the full magnitude of the dharma, he simply wants them exposed to the tradition from an early age, as he had been, so that later, they can appreciate Buddhism fully.

This stands in stark contrast to members of the English sangha who I interviewed, only one of which had children living with her (Laura). The others with whom I spoke tended to be older, and had not incorporated Buddhism into their children's upbringing, generally having come to the religion once their children were already grown. Laura McNeely, mother of two teenaged girls, explained to me how she had once tried to establish a Buddhist children's group in Boulder, but the program had faded quickly. The children, unable to grasp the meaning behind the dharma, were disinterested or unreceptive to the teachings. The parents did not see the program as benefitting their children's spirituality, and it was subsequently discontinued. This illustrates the stark contrast between the Vietnamese and English sangha's respective approaches to Buddhism. For the Vietnamese, the habit of daily ritual and belief come first, where as the English prioritize understanding the teachings before establishing practice or beliefs.

The different emphases of each sangha are mirrored in how each community chooses to practice, and offer a possible reason behind the total separation of the two groups. Vietnamese practice largely concentrates on chanting sutras (teachings from the Buddha), a ritual which is performed communally by the adult sangha members during their weekly practice on Sunday mornings. Chanting lasts about an hour and is performed in front of the large shrine of the Buddha in the main room of the monastery. Led by Thay Tinh Man and the other monks who sit directly in front of the shrine, the sangha arranges itself in rows behind them, with a meditation cushion, prayer book, and carved wooden book holder at each spot. The chanting, which marches on at a steady, continuous pace, frequently incorporates bows and prostrations, and is accompanied by a constant drum beat and periodic bell and gong ringing. Generally, the children do not participate in the chanting since they have class at the same time. However, I did observe several children join their parents during a week that the language class had been cancelled. They sat in the back row (next to me), and did not read, chant, or bow along with the adults, but instead observed. They left after about thirty minutes to go play.

The English sangha also participates in chanting, but not to the same extent of the Vietnamese sangha. Instead, their weekly practice has a larger emphasis on dharma teaching, meditation, and personal contemplation. Both sanghas reported the huge importance of meditation to their practice, yet I found it interesting that only the English sangha incorporate meditation into their weekly Tuesday gathering. Still, members of the English sangha repeatedly informed me of the importance of chanting to their practice. Elise Jones explained the communal significance, describing how “the chanting brings the sangha together in a way…it is something that is definitely a communal experience” (personal interview, Sept 2014).

For the English and Vietnamese sanghas alike, this sense of community at Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery is absolutely crucial to members' spirituality and Buddhist practice. On the surface, Buddhism can often appear a very individual venture, based on solitary meditation or silent reflection. But in reality, the sangha serves as an immense support system. For the Vietnamese sangha, we have already seen the significance of the CDCM community in engaging with others of a shared cultural heritage, and passing that heritage on to a younger generation. But beyond that, sangha members of both groups shared how those around them not only provide friendship and important social relationships, but how the sangha directly contributes to new insights and advice regarding the Buddhist path. Langs Li explained how conversations in the community often help him see teachings in a new light or from a different perspective, while the monks are critical in teaching simple techniques and teachings to keep him inspired. These sentiments were general shared by interviewees, regardless of sangha. Laura (English sangha) emphasized the unity she feels in the sangha through chanting: "…that was a really important thing to have, that community. And I was especially appreciative of that when we were doing our English chanting tonight, just about how… having people to practice with is huge" (Laura McNeely, personal interview, Sept 2014). For Long (Vietnamese sangha), the importance of community "is something beyond words. It's not a place or a location but it's an energy within the community of the sangha" (personal interview, Sept 2014).

Clearly, both communities of practice greatly value communal ritual and support, and benefit significantly from the social learning that takes place in each habitus. However, it is interesting and insightful to note how the two sanghas view each other. Laura, talking about the Vietnamese sangha, picked up on the social and cultural aspect of the group's interactions, noting how much more important personal relationships appeared to be for them.

> It's been interesting seeing the Vietnamese community and how much more their practice feels like church to me… You know, the social and the cultural are highly integrated. So it's not just coming to practice. Not that there isn't the social stuff at Tuesday night, for example and the connections that we make, but it doesn't feel so integrated. (personal interview, Sept 2014)

For the Vietnamese sangha, members intentionally seek out this social aspect, whereas for the English sangha, interpersonal connections happen as a side effect to one's individual practice. On the other hand, Long praised the English sangha's level of understanding. Noting how the Vietnamese sangha is very involved with ritual practice, he explained "the Western side of things, they actually understand Buddhism in a deeper sense. I mean Buddhism as a way of life…I think Westerners see it at a more deeper level. That's just my perception" (personal interview, Sept 2014). This view reestablishes the different focuses of the two communities of practice, and shows that the Vietnamese sangha is aware that their practice differs from the English sangha. It again illuminates the latter's emphasis on the philosophical and spiritual side of Buddhism over ritual and ceremony, although I hypothesize that Long's observation is only a reflection of the communal interactions of each sangha. From personal interviews and interactions, I perceived that the Vietnamese and English sanghas were equal in their understanding and love of Buddhist teachings.

Of crucial importance, especially to the English sangha, was the flexibility and lack of pressure or expectation felt at Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery. Interviewees repeatedly told me how accepting and nonjudgmental the monastery felt as a whole, and many English sangha practitioners contrasted this with previous experiences with other religions. Elise Jones spoke particularly strongly about this.

> One of the things I really like about coming here is that unlike a traditional church or whatever, when you feel that you *want* to be here, you are

> absolutely embraced. And that's so different from my early religious experiences, which were all more about *having* to be there. Being regular, going every Sunday, that sort of thing. So this was really a wonderful spot, because I knew that when my mind and heart came into the place where I wanted to be here, that you know, I'd be willing… And I have seen so many people come here. And they just come and go, come and go, come and go. And I'm fascinated by that. By the ok-ness of that… People arrive when they feel like they need it, and then they disappear. And I can't help but think that it's going to spread the light somehow. (personal interview, Sept 2014)

This sense of personal choice regarding when and how one practices attracts many Westerners to Buddhism, and is very connected to the overall structure of the tradition as a whole. In contrast to many other religions such as Christianity or Judaism, where participation is based on believing certain creeds or doctrines, practitioners of Buddhism identify themselves as Buddhists based solely on the fact that they take refuge in the Three Jewels: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the sangha. Rather than a mandated belief, Buddhism simply teaches the path that led Siddhartha Gautama to enlightenment. The monastery's recognition of the individual's choice and control over their spiritual experience absolutely affects the community and ways of practice for both sanghas, as exhibited by Elise's remark. Both groups experience a fluidity of membership, yet weekly practice is kept consistent, providing familiarity to those who might not come routinely.

Perhaps this is why many members of the English sangha emphasized to me the difference between spiritual practice and religion, noting how Buddhism fell decidedly into the former category. Kaylie Williams spoke particularly strongly on this topic. Raised in the Congregational Church, she explained how, growing up, she had had a lot of trouble with the blind faith required in Christianity, and would get in trouble for questioning the word of Jesus. But finding Buddhism later in life, one of the aspects that she appreciated most was the constant questioning, practice, and learning involved. "I don't have to follow it as a religion, and it's

become more and more clear to me that what the Buddha taught was not a religion" (personal interview, Sept 2014). Here, we see that, for Kaylie and many other practitioners, the distinguishing factor between spirituality and religiosity is the ability to question teachings and exert a certain amount of personal agency in one's practice. There are no absolute creeds in Buddhism, and individuals are encouraged towards inquisitiveness. Echoing the Buddha, Thay Tinh Man gave a dharma talk about just this during one of my observation days. "Don't believe it because I tell you to, or because some great master tells you to," he said, "believe it because it is true to your heart and your Buddha-nature" (personal interview, Dec 2014).

This concept, deeply ingrained in Buddhist teachings, explains much of why the tradition has been so widely accepted and adapted over the centuries. Thich Quang Phap explained to me in great detail the importance of "upaya" or "skillful means" in Buddhism, an aspect of teaching that takes into account the different needs of each individual practitioner.

> Upaya in Sanskrit means skillful means. So the teacher, he sees for the West how they can adapt the teaching and the practice so that they can fit with that…it's not just dogmatic. We have different levels of understanding; we have different backgrounds… so we cannot use the same prototype for everyone. (personal interview, Sept 2014)

For Buddhism now, the important part of practice lies not in maintaining a 2000 year-old tradition exactly as it has been practiced before, but in ensuring that modern-day practitioners understand the true nature of Buddhist teachings and can apply them in their daily life to reduce suffering in their lives and the lives of those around them. Taking into account the drastically different culture and environment in which Buddhists now practice, it only makes sense that monastics and masters change their approach to better reach the sangha. "Skillful means" refers to these different means or methods of teaching the Buddhist path in an accessible manner, and lies at the heart of Compassionate

Dharma Cloud Monastery (and Buddhism as a whole). Thich Quang Phap explained to me that there must be a different balance between textual tradition, practice, and realization, depending on the individual's background and progress along the Buddhist path. Considering the dissimilarities between the Vietnamese and English sangha, it follows that each of these groups requires a different approach, a distinct means of accessing the Buddhist path. Each community thus practices and reproduces a slightly different culture, teaching slightly different paths to the same ultimate goal.

Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings emphasize this concept greatly, adapting Buddhism even more, so as to make the tradition more accessible for modern-day practitioners. His approach resonates especially well with the English sangha, as he carries the lack of expectation or mandated belief a step further. For example, instead of saying the Five Precepts (the five central rules of a Buddhist practitioner: abstain from killing or harming living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, or using intoxicants such as alcohol and drugs), Thich Nhat Hanh calls them the Five Mindfulness Trainings, and phrases them as guidelines with which to train the mind, not concrete rules or precepts (Laura McNeely, personal interview, Sept 2014). "I think 'precepts' turned off a lot of people in the West," explained Laura, "That sort of commandment thing – people are like "don't tell me what to do." So I'll take these [Mindfulness] Trainings, and these are trainings that I can really employ" (personal interview Sept 2014). In addition to this softening of Buddhist teachings, interviewees stressed the ease with which they can apply Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings in daily life. "Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings are so integrated into daily life that this practice is not on the cushion, its not just doing walking meditation or whatever, it's every moment," explained Laura (personal interview, Sept 2014). She also noted how

even her husband, who is not Buddhist himself, finds this aspect of Thich Nhat Hanh's trainings very appealing. The use of his teachings at CDCM undoubtedly widens the center's audience and attracts a huge range of Westerners to Buddhism. Taught to both Vietnamese and English sanghas alike, this common philosophy unifies the two groups, and allows us to see past their differing forms of practice. Indeed, my observations and interviews with both sanghas always came back to the same point, regardless of who was speaking or how they expressed their spirituality. I repeatedly saw that all members of Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery expressed a deep appreciation for the monastery and their practice, and simply strove to live loving and compassionate lives in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha.

VI. CONCLUSION

Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery offers a fascinating point of study, and illustrates the quickly developing nature of American Buddhism today. Thinking of CDCM in terms of Bourdieu and Wenger's theories, the importance of social support and learning becomes clear. We can understand the two sanghas as distinct habituses, operating in the same field with each reproducing its own culture. This unusual two-sangha system exemplifies the monastery's rare approach to providing for the many different forms of Buddhists now practicing in the United States. Applying Machacek's classification system here, CDCM clearly caters specifically to American-born converts to Buddhism and traditional Buddhist immigrants who practice as part of their cultural heritage.

As both of these sanghas age, develop, and grow, it is clear that CDCM will have to adapt to serve this new, currently emerging Americanized Buddhism. The children of each sangha

illustrate this newly surfacing group, representing the first generation to belong to Machacek's fourth and final category. As a future point of study, I would be fascinated to see how these young American Buddhists further evolve and incorporate their spirituality in the modern Western culture. Will they integrate the practices of the two sanghas from which they grew? Or will new, entirely American forms of practice emerge? This group of young American Buddhists is uniquely poised at this point in time, and can offer great insight into the future of Buddhism in the West.

The current structure of CDCM, with its clear division between the two sanghas, illustrates the strikingly different role of Buddhism in the lives of each group's practitioners. By keeping these two communities of practice separate for the vast majority of practice, CDCM both acknowledges and provides for the different social and spiritual needs of each group. The different communal practices of each sangha illustrate their distinct priorities in the communal setting, with the Vietnamese Sangha heavily emphasizing social interaction, while the English sangha focuses more on meditation and personal contemplation. Yet despite these drastic differences in communal practice, personal interviews revealed very similar core values regarding individual practice. For all members of Compassionate Dharma Cloud Monastery, the deep love of the Buddhist tradition shone clearly, and merely found different expression in each sangha.

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Appendix A

Western Adaptations of Buddhism Consent Form
Fiona Horner
Mario Montano, advisor
Colorado College Department of Anthropology
719-389-6358
fiona.horner@coloradocollege.edu

You are invited to take part in a research study of the adaptations of Buddhism in Colorado.

What the study is about: This study looks at how this ancient, traditionally Eastern religion has been adapted to fit the cultural and spiritual needs of modern-day Coloradans, and will focus on the specific practices through which individuals incorporate Buddhism into their daily lives.

What you will be asked to do: Participation for this section of research will include personal interviews, which will be recorded by a voice-recording device.

Risks and benefits: There are no anticipated risks to you if you participate in this study, beyond those encountered in everyday life.

This research will benefit the field of anthropology by illuminating the differences in cultural, communal, and spiritual needs of Buddhists in Colorado. Previous research has focused primarily on Buddhism through history, how the religion has spread, or on established Eastern communities of practice. This study will open up a new conversation on how and why Western Buddhism differs from other areas.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to be in the study you can skip any questions or withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. Participating in this study does not mean that you are giving up any of your legal rights.

Your answers will be confidential: Interviews will be recorded on an audio recording device, and later transcribed. The records of this study will be kept private on my personal computer, and records will be destroyed after transcription. However, I may wish to include quotes from your interview in my final paper. Please indicate which of the following you agree with:

☐ I consent to the use of my name in any report of this research that is made available to the public.

☐ I do not want my name or any other individual or identifying information to be used in any report of this research that is made available to the public, but I consent to being called by a pseudonym for the purposes of quotes.

☐ I do not want my name or any other individual or identifying information to be used in any report of this research that is made available to the public.

If you have questions or want a copy or summary of the study results: Contact the researcher at the email address or phone number above. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records. If you have any questions about whether you have been treated in an illegal or unethical way, contact the Colorado College Institutional Research Board chair, Amanda Udis-Kessler at 719-227-8177 or audiskessler@coloradocollege.edu.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions. I affirm that I am 18 years of age or older, and I consent to take part in the research study of the Western adaptations of Buddhism in Colorado.

________________________________   ________________________

Participants Signature   Date

Appendix B

Appendix II – Personal Interview

***This list of questions includes all possible interview questions, but not all will be asked of each interviewee. This will depend on whether the individual is part of a monastic community or not.**

Name:
Age:

1) Were you raised Buddhist, or did you convert later in life?
2) If raised Buddhist:
    a. How did your family effect your beliefs and practice?
    b. Do you see them as being an important part of your religious or spiritual experience?
3) If converted to Buddhism:
    a. How long ago did you convert to Buddhism?
    b. Did you leave another religious affiliation?
    c. Why did you choose the specific tradition of Buddhism that you did?
    d. Why did you decide to follow the path of Buddhism?
    e. Was there anyone or anything in particular that influenced your decision?
4) What do you see as being the most important aspect of Buddhist **practice** for you personally and why?
   For the Buddhist community as a whole?
5) What is the most important aspect of Buddhist **teaching or philosophy** for you personally and why?
   For the Buddhist community as a whole?
6) Do others in your Buddhist community play a large role (by providing support, help, instruction, etc.) in your spirituality and journey along the Buddhist path?
7) (Non-monastics) Do you actively engage with Bhiksu or Bhiksunis? If yes, how?
   Do you monetarily support monastics?
8) (Monastics) How important is the lay community to supporting your lifestyle or practice?
9) (Monastics) What influenced you to become fully ordained as a bhiksu/bhiksuni?
10) How do you integrate Buddhism into your daily life? Which specific practices do you do on a regular basis?

11) How important are Buddhist religious text – sutras, the vinaya, or abhidharma - the to your daily practice?
12) How important are non-religious Buddhist texts to your practice?
13) Do you regularly participate in events within your Buddhist community, such as lectures, discussions, group meditations, or retreats?
    If so, what type of events do you attend and how important to your overall practice are they?
14) What role does the Internet play in your daily practice?
15) Ever since Buddhism's first introduction to the United States, people have argued that it has been wrongly interpreted and drastically changed. For example, many say that in his teachings, Suzuki misrepresented Zen to appeal to the Western mindset by downplaying the religion's institutionalization, and emphasizing the tradition's scientific nature and one's personal experience on the path. Do you encounter this in your practice? Do you feel like Buddhism in the United States is drastically different than that practiced in the East?
16) Similarly, some feel that Buddhism has been wrongly appropriated by pop culture in the United States, and believe that some segments of the population treat it as a style or fad as opposed to a serious belief system. Do you encounter this in your practice? Do you feel that Buddhism has been wrongly appropriated like this?
17) American culture tends to put great value on individuality and personal success. How does this fit into the Buddhist beliefs of no-self (anatman), emptiness (sunyata) and dependent origination (pratityasamutpada)? Does this contradiction cause difficulties for Western Buddhists? For yourself?
18) Buddhism traces its roots to the ancient "renouncer" traditions of India, which Siddhartha Gautama took part of prior to his enlightenment. This tradition required that the 'renouncer' "[goes] forth from the household life into homelessness" (Gethin, 10). This fed into the monastic way of life for Buddhists in the following centuries. Do you feel that your practice includes the renunciation of 'typical' modern or Western lifestyle? Do you feel that full enlightenment can be attained without renunciation of such a lifestyle?
19) The Dharma can be understood as being composed of three broad components: textual tradition, practice, and realization (Gethin, 38). Gethin notes that a certain amount of tension has existed between these components, as some tend to emphasize the importance of one part over the others. Do you see one as being of higher priority?
20) Buddhism began as an oral tradition, with teachings of the Buddha passed down by word of mouth from one follower of the Buddha to another. This ensured that textual tradition and practice were kept in a close relationship, so followers of the Buddhist path developed both

simultaneously. Modern Western emphasis on written text has resulted in a shift away from this oral tradition and direct contact. Do you see this as a problem in modern Buddhism? Does this distance one's study from the context of practice?

21) Historically, the Buddhist monastic society has been a mandatory prerequisite for the existence of a Buddhist community. Without the Sangha living and teaching the path, there is no Buddhism (Gethin, 92). Do you believe this continues to be true for Buddhism in America?

22) Do you believe that arhatship possible in present day?

23) Is there anything else you would like to add?