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**The role of frequent personal religious practice in Buddhist teen religiosity**

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## **The role of frequent personal religious practice in Buddhist teen religiosity**

### **Abstract**

A quantitative study explored the relationship for teen Buddhists in Britain between the frequency of personal religious practice (PRP), affective religiosity (as measured by Thanissaro's 24-item Scale of Attitude towards Buddhism), individual differences in attitudes and Psychological Type (as measured by the Francis Psychological Type Scales). Those with frequent PRP (18% practising daily and 54% monthly) were more likely to want their children to grow up Buddhist and felt school was helping them prepare for life. Only daily PRP was associated with Buddhist worldview whereas less frequent PRP was associated with collectivist and traditionalist attitudes. Daily PRP was found to be positively linked with affective religiosity for heritage Buddhists, males, females and 17-to-20-year-olds, but linked with diminished affective religiosity for convert Buddhists. Daily PRP was associated with a Sensing preference in terms of Psychological Type, rather than psychoticism predicted by some previous meditation research.

### **Keywords**

Buddhism; meditation; religiosity; teenage; Psychological Type

## **The role of frequent personal religious practice in Buddhist teen religiosity**

### **Introduction**

#### *Personal religious practice in Buddhists*

Whether for Buddhism or any other religion, aspects of religiosity amenable to empirical measurement are usually limited to self-identification with a religion, belief, affective religiosity and religious participation. The fourth aspect can be subdivided into intrinsic or *personal* forms of religious practice (hereafter abbreviated to “PRP”) such as prayer, chanting or meditation as contrasted to extrinsic or *collective* forms of religious participation such as churchgoing. Personal and collective religious participation warrant separate experimental consideration since research from non-Buddhist faith traditions has highlighted different religious nurture functions for each. In the Christian tradition, the frequency of PRP such as prayer has been shown to be an important contributory factor to intrinsic religiosity (Poloma & Pendleton, 1989) whereas parental intervention tends to predict development of extrinsic expressions of religiosity such as churchgoing in children (Francis & Craig, 2006; Francis, Penny & Powell, 2016). This study can be said to focus on PRP generally, although for comparison with previous research, the term is occasionally used interchangeably with the term “meditation” in this Buddhist context.<sup>1</sup>

The study also investigates the place of PRP in the relationship between different aspects of Buddhist religiosity. Empirical study of Buddhist PRP contributes to knowledge since the mechanism by which identity develops through PRP is under-researched, with most current research on PRP such as meditation and focusing on physiological changes in the brain. The study has implications for Buddhist nurture in its religious context, rather than the concentration by the literature on mindfulness practices in their secular context and has the potential to reveal the importance of PRP to being Buddhist, while elucidating the differences in the perception of this for different Buddhist demographic sub-groups.

### ***Meditation as PRP in non-Buddhist traditions***

Meditation as PRP is found, of course, not only in Buddhism, but also in the contemplative traditions of other religions. Ironically, the initiative to research the relationship between attitudes and meditation seems more widespread in non-Buddhist traditions. In making comparisons between Buddhist and non-Buddhist meditation contexts, caution in the use of related terminology is expedient. *Meditatio* in Catholicism is characterized as imaginative and discursive PRP, reflecting on scriptural tracts whereas *contemplatio* is understood as rare mystical experience that is the product of *meditatio*. In Buddhism, meditation is described as a practice where the

practitioner returns to the source *prior* to words or letters – that is to return to the Buddha mind (Abe, 1995, pp. 174-175). Thus, the enlightened result of meditation in Buddhism is closer to the Christian term *contemplatio* whereas *meditatio* is akin to reflection upon scriptural tracts. Previous research with non-Buddhist adults in Australia linked meditation with *increased* psychoticism scores on Eysenck's Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) whereas prayer was linked with decreased psychoticism scores (Kaldor, Francis & Fisher, 2002).

### ***Possible roles of Buddhist PRP***

Even where Buddhist parents let their children make up their own minds about Buddhism, part of due parental diligence in ensuring children *can* make an informed decision often includes encouraging children to adopt frequent PRP. Consequently, some children of Buddhist parents may be obliged to sit and meditate, pray or chant with their parents at home or during temple visits – and as a result of this experience, even without direct intervention from their parents, may consolidate (or fail to consolidate) their Buddhist identity. In previous qualitative exploration of PRP by the present author (Thanissaro, 2014, pp. 741-2, 748), the practice of meditation was perceived by Buddhist teenagers to have a role in nurturing religiosity by imparting identity, better mental ability, offering a coping

mechanism in times of stress and bringing the practitioner's state of mind closer to Nirvana. For others, meditation was seen to have the social function of making the practitioner more of a pleasure to be with. In that research, although most Buddhists agreed that meditation was not sufficient *in itself*, the practice allowed Buddhists to understand other aspects of their religion properly. Nurture of religious values in Buddhism has been proposed as nurturing worldview (i.e. consciously-held beliefs about how things are or should be) in parallel with ideology (i.e., rhetorical, often subconscious, associations concerning "best possible living" that are learned and maintained in a social environment) with the former being formed by meditation and temple ethos, the latter by parental/social influence and extrinsic religion. Thanissaro also pointed to meditation's important place<sup>2</sup> as the means for nurturing a Buddhist worldview, with parental influence seen to contribute to Buddhist ideology.

***The recommendation to make Buddhist PRP daily***

The importance of frequent PRP in Buddhism is testified by the ubiquitous advice for Buddhists to make PRP a daily habit. Even for secular meditation to reduce stress, daily meditation is stipulated even where a "lower dose" involvement of only 10 minutes per day has been the baseline (Klatt, Buckworth & Malarkey, 2009). Certainly there is an impression

that Buddhist meditation needs to become part of a *daily* routine to give the sought-after benefits – although it remains unclear why less frequent meditation should lose its efficacy.

### ***Intra-Buddhist differences in the role of PRP***

There is also evidence to suggest that there may be intra-Buddhist differences in how PRP is perceived – and these differences might align with Buddhist religious style – here represented by the dichotomy between heritage and convert Buddhists. For heritage Buddhists (those who have ethnic roots in the countries of Asia), meditation is considered a *practice*, while for convert Buddhists (those who have converted to Buddhism independent of their family's influence), meditation is considered a *state of mind* (Thanissaro, 2014, p. 742). Also Bell (1998, pp.155-156) has voiced a more generally held assumption that convert Buddhists tend to emphasise meditation while heritage Buddhists emphasise merit-making.

### ***PRP and Psychological Type***

The Psychological Type of practitioners offers another way of understanding differences in the role of PRP. C.G. Jung's personality theory has been operationalized into several empirical instruments including the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (I. B. Myers & McCaulley, 1985), the



Keirsey Type Sorter (KTS) (Keirsey & Bates, 1978) and the Francis Psychological Type Scales (FPTS) (Francis, 2005) – instruments able to describe the differences between people positively in a way that is easy to remember and engaging. These instruments based on Psychological Type theory, distinguish between two orientations (Extraversion [E] and Introversion [I]), two perceiving functions (Sensing [S] and Intuition [N]), two judging functions (Thinking [T] and Feeling [F]) and two attitudes (Judging [J] and Perceiving [P]). Taken together these four binary choices allow for 16 complete Psychological Type combinations. Thanissaro (2016a) showed that heritage Buddhists, as previously defined, had significantly more of a preference for Intuition (N) than the general UK population but tended more towards Sensing (S) and Extraversion (E) when compared to *convert* Buddhist teens, showing a nuancing of Psychological Type according to style for the heritage-convert dichotomy. A contrasting measure of personality, the EPQ (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1991), focuses not on dichotomies but sliding scales of *degree* for three personality traits – Extraversion, Neuroticism and Psychoticism – where scores at the extremes of any trait are considered pathological. In the EPQ, Psychoticism (characterised as impulsivity and to some extent, inflexibility) has been shown to be positively linked with the Perceiving (P) preference and negatively linked with the Judging (J) preference in the Jungian model

(Francis & Jones, 2000, pp. 383-4; Francis, Jones & Craig, 2004, p. 21). If the “impulsivity” indicative of high Eysenckian psychoticism scores is also true of meditating Buddhist teens, it would be expected that higher frequencies of meditation would correspond with an elevated level of “Perceiving” (P) preference and a diminished level of “Judging” (J) preference in terms of Jungian Psychological Type.

### ***Research questions***

This study set out to examine the role of PRP in Buddhist teen religiosity. The main correspondence examined will be between PRP and Buddhist affective religiosity, but will employ significant differences in attitudes to help explain the quantitative links. To examine whether the daily PRP ideal is justified, the study looked for any attitude differences between daily and less frequent PRP. The study tested Bell’s assumption about the relative importance of PRP for heritage and convert Buddhists – or indeed whether frequent PRP had a different meaning for convert Buddhists as compared with heritage Buddhists – or a meaning that varied with age, socio-economic group and sex. Finally to test previous psychoticism findings, the study explored whether there were any discernable Psychological Type associations with frequent PRP.

**Methodology*****Sample***

A survey was completed by 417 self-identifying teen Buddhists. Self-identification as a Buddhist was tightly defined since every participant admitted to the study ticked the option “Buddhist” from a choice of religious and non-religious affiliations on a survey question worded “What is your religion?” Participants were recruited at Buddhist events in Britain or via the display of an interest in Buddhist keywords<sup>3</sup> on their Facebook page. Whether participants completed surveys on paper or online, the sample was limited to those resident in the UK and falling within the target age-group. The sample consisted of 225 male (54%) and 192 females (46%) aged between 13 and 20. In this study teenagers were chosen owing to the relevance of their age-group to the notion of religious nurture. In terms of ethnicity, the sample included Buddhists of Asian (52%), White (34%), Mixed (11%) Chinese (2%) and Black (1%) descent. In terms of the temple institutions attended, to give some idea of the intra-religious diversity captured, national affiliation of temples or Buddhist centres attended was found to include Sinhalese (23%), Thai (16%), Tibetan (12%), Burmese (11%), Vietnamese (9%), Japanese (5%), Bangladeshi (3%), Western (2%), Chinese (2%), Nepalese (2%) and Cambodian (1%). It should be noted that religious style was operationalized not

by the country affiliation of the temple or Buddhist centre, but by the participant's stated ethnicity. In this study, heritage-style Buddhists have been operationalised as those who have self-identified using the standard UK ethnic categories of Asian-Indian, Asian-Pakistani, Asian-Bangladeshi, Any Other Asian and Chinese. Convert-style Buddhists have been operationalised as those self-identifying as Black-African, Black-Caribbean and White. In this sample, of those for whom religious style could be ascertained,<sup>4</sup> 61% were heritage and 39% were convert.

### ***Instrument***

A composite questionnaire fielded general questions including ethnicity, age, religious affiliation, country affiliation of temple or Buddhist centre and Buddhist denomination. This general section was followed by questions comprising Thanissaro's (2016b) 24-item Scale of Attitude to Buddhism (TSAB-R) – which in this study was the measure of Buddhist affective religiosity. Additionally, to facilitate interpretation of the individual differences in Buddhist religiosity and practice, an additional twenty Likert five-point Scale (Agree Strongly – Agree – Not Certain – Disagree – Disagree Strongly) values-mapping (attitude) questions were posed selected from a consensus of previous Youth Values Surveys (Francis & Penny, 2013), issues raised by young people as important to

their Buddhist practice (Loundon, 2001, p. xvi) including being a “proper” Buddhist, perpetuating Buddhism for the next generation and caring for parents in old age, World Values Survey questions (derived from Inglehart & Welzel, 2005, p. 51) to measure the traditionality of values and a set of questions (derived from Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk & Gelfand, 1995) to measure the collectivist values (*see Appendix*).

Psychological Type was measured by the 50-item version of the FPTTS (Francis, 2005) which uses an ipsative scoring system and forced-choice format. Although measuring the same preferences as the MBTI and KTS, the FPTTS was chosen for its proven superiority as a comparative research tool (Francis, 2009, p. 131). Previous research has shown that the eight scales of the FPTTS have alpha-coefficients ranging from .84 to .90 which are well above the acceptable level of .65 (DeVellis, 2003), that the instrument has a satisfactory factor structure (Francis, Laycock & Brewster, 2017) and has achieved concurrent validity (Brewster, Francis & Robbins, 2011, p. 248).

The operant question used to determine frequency of PRP was “How often do you meditate, chant or pray?” and respondents were able to rate their PRP as: “never”, “occasionally”, “at least once a month”, “at least once a week”, or “nearly every day”. Although it would have been preferable to distinguish between prayer and meditation, this general

question wording was retained to allow direct comparison with previous Youth Values Surveys. Although this paper can claim only to explore Buddhist PRP, owing to the broad phrasing chosen for the research question, since Caldwell-Harris et al. (2011, p. 663) have indicated that Buddhists more than Christians or Atheists tend to use silence or meditation rather than prayer to reach deeper spiritual realization, the terms “meditation” and “PRP” are used interchangeably in some places where previous meditation research is compared.

### ***Procedure***

Surveys were distributed in the period 2013-14 in both paper and online formats. In analysis, using the relevant routines of the SPSS statistical package (SPSS\_Inc., 1988), where variables were normally distributed scale measures (e.g. TSAB-R scores as a measure of Buddhist affective religiosity) significant differences were measured by an independent means *t*-test. Where variables were ordinal measures of non-normal distribution, (e.g. the 5-point coding of *individual*-item Likert style attitude questions that yielded percentage agreement or PRP frequency categories) significant differences were measured by a chi-square test with Yates correction. To avoid any possibility that the relationship between frequent PRP and affective religiosity be confounded with other individual

differences such as age, sex, religious style or socio-economic group, a within-groups test was made in each demographic sub-group of the relationship between frequent PRP and affective religiosity. Reference was made to significant attitude differences (*see Appendix*) as an aid to interpretation.

## Results

### *Affective Religiosity linked generally with frequency of PRP*

**Table 1. Frequency of PRP for Buddhist teens (% incidence)**

	<i>Never</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Monthly</i>	<i>Weekly</i>	<i>Daily</i>
Generally	18	28	12	24	18
Heritage	8	26	13	28	26
Convert	40	28	11	20	4

In overview, it was found generally that 54% of the Buddhist teens had a PRP frequency that was at least monthly and that 18% had a frequency that was at least daily (see Table 1 for full details). The differences between heritage and convert PRP frequencies will be examined further in the “religious style” section below.

**Table 2. TSAB-R affective religiosity scores for Buddhists with different frequencies of PRP**

<i>PRP fre- quency</i>	<i>infreq</i>		<i>freq</i>		<i>t-test</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Monthly	95.02	13.78	97.31	12.62	1.47
Weekly	95.36	13.39	97.49	12.87	1.62
Daily	95.36	13.25	100.43	12.21	3.03**

*Note: For this table, "infreq" means all the categories less frequent than the PRP frequency in question; \*\* = p < .01*

As shown in Table 2, where the frequency of PRP was monthly or weekly, the difference between affective Buddhist religiosity scores for the frequent and infrequent categories was *not* found to be significant. Only in the case that PRP was daily was a significantly higher Buddhist affective religiosity score observed for frequent PRP.

Buddhist attitudes linked generally with frequent PRP (whether at the daily or monthly level), as compared with those who had less frequent PRP (i.e. all less frequent groups combined), included wanting their children to grow up Buddhist (infrequent agree = 41%; frequent agree = 54%;  $\chi^2=6.1$ ;  $p<.05$ ) and feeling school was helping them prepare for life (infrequent agree = 50%; frequent agree = 63%;  $\chi^2=6.3$ ;  $p<.01$ ).

In terms of attitude differences linked specifically with monthly PRP, it was found that compared with those with less frequent PRP, those with monthly PRP were more likely to agree with collectivist prerogatives such as liking the people they went to school with (infrequent agree =



60%; frequent agree = 70%;  $\chi^2=4.0$ ;  $p<.05$ ), being influenced by their family (infrequent agree = 52%; frequent agree = 69%;  $\chi^2=12.3$ ;  $p<.001$ ), doing what pleased their families even if they detested the activity (infrequent agree = 34%; frequent agree = 45%;  $\chi^2=4.7$ ;  $p<.05$ ) and thinking the wellbeing of their fellows important (infrequent agree = 64%; frequent agree = 74%;  $\chi^2=4.6$ ;  $p<.05$ ). They were also more likely to agree with traditionalist prerogatives such as having a strong sense of national pride (infrequent agree = 30%; frequent agree = 46%;  $\chi^2=10.0$ ;  $p<.01$ ) and respect for those in authority (infrequent agree = 48%; frequent agree = 60%;  $\chi^2=5.1$ ;  $p<.05$ ). By contrast, only in the case of daily PRP was it found that compared with those with less frequent PRP (i.e. all less frequent groups combined), were Buddhists more likely to feel their life had a sense of purpose (infrequent agree = 57%; frequent agree = 73%;  $\chi^2=5.5$ ;  $p<.05$ ), to think it important for a child to learn to be independent and self-determined (infrequent agree = 75%; frequent agree = 86%;  $\chi^2=4.0$ ;  $p<.05$ ), to have a pro-life stance on abortion (infrequent agree = 18%; frequent agree = 35%;  $\chi^2=9.2$ ;  $p<.01$ ) and to want to look after parents in their old age (Infrequent agree = 45%; frequent agree = 61%;  $\chi^2=5.8$ ;  $p<.05$ ). For results from this point onwards, “frequent” (“freq” in

tables) will refer to “daily PRP” and “infrequent” (“infreq” in tables) will refer to “less frequent than daily PRP”.

***Relation between frequent PRP and affective religiosity for sub-groups***

**Table 3. TSAB-R affective religiosity scores for Buddhists from different demographic subgroup for daily or less frequent than daily PRP**

<b><i>Demo-graphic variable</i></b>	<b><i>infreq</i></b>		<b><i>freq</i></b>		<b><i>t-test</i></b>
	<b><i>M</i></b>	<b><i>SD</i></b>	<b><i>M</i></b>	<b><i>SD</i></b>	
Heritage	95.90	11.91	102.28	10.37	3.62***
Convert	96.12	14.48	87.66	15.60	-2.96**
Males	95.25	12.86	99.69	11.68	2.05*
Females	95.48	13.72	101.41	12.99	2.25*
Early teens (13-16)	96.30	12.43	100.13	10.97	1.89
Late teens (17-20)	94.30	14.11	100.90	14.07	2.32*
Upper class	94.80	12.54	99.76	11.81	1.93
Middle class	96.78	12.52	102.25	10.04	1.85
Lower class	95.23	12.74	104.33	10.40	1.68

*Note: \* = p < .05; \*\* = p < .01; \*\*\* = p < .001*

Table 3 is a summary of differences in affective religiosity between frequent and infrequent PRP for each demographic sub-group. In search for a possible reason for differences in affective religiosity corresponding to the different demographic sub-groups, relevant corresponding significant differences in attitudes (*see Appendix, questions 13-20*) are mentioned to facilitate interpretation of the individual differences in correspondence of affective religiosity with PRP.

*Religious style*

Drawing on data already presented in Table 1, incidence of daily PRP was significantly higher ( $\chi^2=27.2$ ;  $p<.001$ ) for heritage Buddhists (26%) than convert Buddhists (4%). Furthermore, incidence of monthly PRP was also significantly higher ( $\chi^2=34.4$ ;  $p<.001$ ) for heritage Buddhists (67%) than convert Buddhists (35%). As shown in Table 3, affective religiosity was positively associated with incidence of frequent PRP for heritage Buddhists. Consistent with this, heritage Buddhists with frequent PRP were more likely to believe in life after death (infrequent agree = 55%; frequent agree = 76%;  $\chi^2=7.2$ ;  $p<.01$ ), consider themselves a proper Buddhist (infrequent agree = 42%; frequent agree = 59%;  $\chi^2=4.3$ ;  $p<.05$ ) and a religious person (infrequent agree = 47%; frequent agree = 66%;  $\chi^2=5.2$ ;  $p<.05$ ). Frequent PRP was found to correspond with significant *decrease* in affective religiosity for convert Buddhists. In explanation of this, convert Buddhists with frequent PRP were more likely to believe Buddhism depended on blind faith (infrequent agree = 1%; frequent agree = 11%;  $\chi^2=5.9$ ;  $p<.05$ ), were less eclectic in their Buddhist tastes (Infrequent agree = 47%; frequent agree = 26%;  $\chi^2=4.2$ ;  $p<.05$ ) and were less likely to be a “stay-at-home” Buddhist rather than a temple attendee (Infrequent agree = 68%; frequent agree = 43%;  $\chi^2=6.2$ ;  $p<.05$ ).

*Sex differences*

There was found to be no significant difference in the incidence of frequent PRP between male and female Buddhist teens (Monthly PRP was found in 52% of males and 57% of females – a difference ( $\chi^2=0.8$ ) that was not significant) and frequent PRP was found to correspond with heightened affective religiosity for both males and females. Perceptions of PRP were not identical however, since Buddhist males with frequent PRP were more likely than were those with infrequent PRP to consider meditation sufficient as a Buddhist practice (infrequent agree = 47%; frequent agree = 64%;  $\chi^2=6.2$ ;  $p<.05$ ) whereas Buddhist females with frequent PRP were more likely to consider themselves to be a proper Buddhist (infrequent agree = 42%; frequent agree = 59%;  $\chi^2=4.3$ ;  $p<.05$ ).

*Age differences*

Although there was no significant difference in the incidence of daily PRP for Buddhists of the early teen (13-16 year old) and late teen (17-20 year old) age groups (daily PRP was found in 20% of early teens and 15% of late teens – a difference ( $\chi^2=1.3$ ) that was not significant), daily PRP was found to correspond with heightened affective religiosity only for late teens. In explanation of this, late teens with daily PRP were more likely to

believe in the Buddhist tenet that happiness is subjective (infrequent agree = 68%; frequent agree = 85%;  $\chi^2=8.0$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Daily PRP was not however found to correspond with any significant difference in affective religiosity for Buddhists in their early teens.

#### *Socio-economic group*

It was found that there was no significant difference (daily PRP was found in 20% of the professional socio-economic group, 15% of the administrative group and 11% of the elementary group – a difference ( $\chi^2=2.5$ ) that was not statistically significant) in the incidence of daily PRP between Buddhist teens of the different socio-economic groups, and that incidence of daily PRP also did *not* correspond with any significant difference in affective religiosity for Buddhists of the three socio-economic group categories.

**Psychological Type Differences between frequent and infrequent PRP**

**Table 4. Summary of Selection Ratio Indices (I) for differences in Psychological Type between frequent and infrequent PRP Buddhist teens**

Type	% preference		I
	infreq	freq	
<b>S</b>	43	61	1.4**
<b>SJ</b>	37	82	1.4**
<b>IS</b>	20	37	1.9**
<b>N</b>	57	40	0.7**
<b>P</b>	27	17	0.6
<b>J</b>	73	84	1.2

Note: S=Sensing preference; SJ=Sensing and Judging, otherwise known as the "Guardian temperament"; IS=Introvert Sensors; N=Intuitive preference; P=Perceiving preference; J=Judging preference; \*\* = p< .01

The alpha coefficients generated by the FPTS for this particular dataset of Buddhist teenagers was .74 for extraversion and introversion, .79 for sensing and intuition, .74 for feeling and thinking and .71 for perceiving and judging – which although lower than for previously cited samples of adult churchgoers, are still well above the DeVellis (2003) recommended threshold of .65. As shown in Table 4, in general Buddhist teens with frequent PRP (calculated at the daily level) were significantly more likely than Buddhists with infrequent PRP to have a Sensing (S) preference, a Sensing and Judging preference pair (SJ) [also known as the Guardian temperament] and an Introvert Sensing preference pair (IS). Those with the Sensing preference are characterized by orientation to present realities;

they are factual and concrete, focus on what is real and actual, observe and remember details, build carefully and thoroughly towards conclusions, understand ideas and theories' practical applications and trust experience (Isabel Briggs Myers, 2000, p. 9). In practice, those of the SJ temperament are characterized as wanting to "fit in" and have membership, having hunger for responsibility, accountability and predictability, tending to fulfil duties, maintain institutions and standard operating procedures – looking to the past and tradition, fostering enculturation with ceremonies and rules and thinking in terms of what is conventional (Berens, 1998, p. 12). Those who are Introvert Sensers (IS) are characterized as "thoughtful realists" (Isabel Briggs Myers, 2000, p. 33). In general Buddhist teens who had frequent PRP, were significantly *less* likely to have an Intuitive (N) preference. In practice, preference for Intuition means orientation towards future possibilities, being imaginative and verbally creative, focusing on patterns and meanings in data, moving quickly towards conclusions, following hunches, wanting to clarify ideas and theories before putting them into practice and trusting inspiration (Isabel Briggs Myers, 2000, p. 9). There was found to be no significant difference in the Perceiving (P) or Judging (J) preferences between those with frequent or infrequent PRP.

## **Discussion**

### ***Attitudes associated with frequency of PRP***

It was found that 54% of Buddhist teens generally had a monthly PRP and 18% had a daily PRP. Those with frequent PRP were more likely to want their children to grow up Buddhist and feel school was helping them prepare for life.

There was some empirical justification for the Buddhist tendency to idealize *daily* PRP, since results showed that daily (rather than less frequent) PRP seemed to be linked with the development of certain aspects of the Buddhist worldview. Only for Buddhists where PRP was daily, was practice linked with heightened affective religiosity, sense of purpose in life, wanting children to be independent and self-determined, a pro-life stance on abortion and wanting to look after parents in their old age. By contrast attitude patterns linked with less frequent PRP, perhaps where meditation had become a sort of “sitting ritual”, seemed to be linked with collectivist values such as liking fellow pupils, being influenced by one’s family, obedience to family wishes and concern for the wellbeing of one’s fellows. Traditionalist values that were linked with less frequent than daily PRP included national pride and respect for those in authority.



***Different roles for PRP between heritage and convert***

Although in previous research, there has been the assumption that convert Buddhists emphasise meditation whereas heritage Buddhists emphasise merit-making (1998, pp.155-156), the more detailed examination allowed by this study's methodology has shown instead that frequent PRP corresponded with a different set of attitudes for heritage Buddhists than it did for convert Buddhists and hence that heritage and convert Buddhists are likely to have different motivations for frequent PRP. Convert Buddhists with frequent PRP had diminished affective religiosity, being more likely to think Buddhism depended on blind faith, but less likely to be eclectic in their Buddhist tastes and less likely to be a stay-at-home Buddhist. By contrast, heritage Buddhists with frequent PRP had stronger Buddhist beliefs and heightened affective religiosity – being more likely to believe in life after death, consider themselves a proper Buddhist and a religious person. Furthermore, heritage Buddhists were found to have significantly higher incidence of frequent PRP than converts, whether considered at the monthly or daily level, contrasting with Bell's expectation that converts would be the more frequent meditators, unless it were the case that heritage PRP comprised relatively more prayer and chanting than meditation. McLellan (1999, p. 207) observed that religious practice provides *identity* for heritage Buddhists, but worldview for convert Buddhists. Similarly, for

heritage Buddhists teenagers in this study, frequent PRP seems to consolidate Buddhist identity. For the convert Buddhist teenagers in this study, frequent PRP seemed to link with incorporation of renunciant values into life – attending the temple, while expressing independence from home and eschewing blind faith.

### ***Psychological type differences and frequency of PRP***

In terms of Psychological Type, Buddhists with frequent PRP were more likely to have a Sensing preference rather than the psychoticism predicted by previous research. Affinity for frequent religious practices seems to attract those with a Sensing preference, especially those with the SJ (or “guardian”) Temperament. Given that daily PRP seems to have special efficacy, Sensors or those with the “guardian” temperament, as lovers of routine, would probably see results from their practice more readily. As for Buddhists with frequent PRP and an Intuitive preference, benefit arising from practice might be accessed more reliably by meditating when the inspiration takes them.<sup>5</sup> In defence of Intuitive success in meditation, those of an Intuitive (N) preference have previously been found to have more mystical experiences than those with a Sensing (S) preference (Campbell, 1983) – but the meditation path of the mystic would presumably be characterized more by spontaneity than daily routine. Any sign of

the expected psychoticism seems to be concerned with traditional values, lack of eclecticism and ingroup mentality, where identity might become entrenched as a form of Barthian border demarcation where one's identity is defined by contrast with the "other". Confusion in previous research may also have stemmed from conflation common in Christian tradition between *meditatio* and *contemplatio* where *contemplatio* is actually more akin to Eastern meditation, whereas *meditatio* tends to be reflection upon scriptural passages – an impulsive "thinking outside the box" exercise that might correspond with heightened psychoticism trait in the EPQ – at least in a Christian context.

### ***Role of PRP for other demographics***

Frequent PRP was found to be linked with heightened affective religiosity for males and females alike, although possibly for different reasons – with females seeing meditation as part of being a "proper Buddhist" while males thought meditation to be the ideal form of Buddhist practice. For Buddhists in their late teens, frequent PRP was significantly linked with heightened affective religiosity and with the Buddhist view that happiness in life is subjective. For Buddhists in their early teens, however, the link between frequent PRP and affective religiosity was not significant. Since scholars have demonstrated that most Buddhists in the West are middle or

upper class, it might be expected that class be intimately linked with patterns of attitudes attributed to frequency of PRP. However, when the link between affective religiosity and frequency of PRP was analyzed within classes for a three-way categorization of socio-economic group (professional, administrative, elementary), no significant difference was found – implying that attitude differences and affective religiosity patterns reported are related to frequency of PRP rather than socio-economic group – especially when there was not found to be any significant difference between incidence of frequent PRP between socio-economic groups.

### ***Role of PRP in Buddhist religiosity***

For Buddhists generally, PRP corresponded with heightened affective religiosity. Nonetheless, the link between PRP and affective religiosity may be reversed in the case of convert Buddhists where meditation is excessively frequent. As this study deals mostly with teenagers still living at home, it is likely that antagonism towards Buddhism is a by-product of convert Buddhists (who are low on collectivist values), being obliged to perform some sort of PRP against their will. Alternatively, the difference could be attributed to any trends for difference of chosen meditation techniques between convert and heritage. Meditation has also been found for Buddhist teens to be the most likely precursor to the arising of a

religious or spiritual experience (Thanissaro, 2015, p. 225). It should be borne in mind too, however that overly frequent PRP may be counterproductive for teen convert Buddhists. The finding that converts preferred to perform their PRP at a temple (or meditation centre) rather than at home may flag up the importance of social factors (such as peers) for convert teen Buddhist nurture. To summarize, the role of frequent PRP, except in the case of converts (where the Intuitive [N] preference makes temple attendance or not being pressurized by parents more important to nurture) seems to correspond with affective religiosity for Buddhists – however to confirm the causal direction of religious factors in nurture would require further research of a longitudinal nature.

## Notes

1. For reasons justified in the methodology section.
2. Together with “immersion in temple ethos”
3. The keywords included the words: arhat (Buddhism), Buddhism, Buddhism Theravada, Buddhist, Buddhist meditation, Burmese Buddhist temple, Dhammakaya meditation, Dhammakaya movement, Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, FWBO, Gautama Buddha, interbeing, Karma Kagyu, Mahayana, merit (Buddhism), New Kadampa Tradition, Order of Interbeing, Samatha, Soka Gakkai International SGI, Theravada, Theravada Buddhism, Theravada Buddhist, Tibetan Buddhism, Triratna Buddhist Community, Vietnamese Family of Buddhism, Vipassana, Vipassana meditation, Zen, Thich Nhat Hanh, Buddhism in Bangladesh, Buddhahood, Diamond Way Buddhism, Buddha’s Dharma, Pure Land Buddhism, Buddha’s Light International Association.
4. Not possible where ethnicity was “mixed”
5. A possible example of the Paths of accomplishment [*iddhipāda*] (D.iii.221) in practice, for which willingness [*chanda*] is the initial factor.

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**Appendix:**

*Attitudes questions rated for levels of agreement in this study*

- (1) I want my children to grow up to be Buddhist.
- (2) My school is helping me prepare for life.
- (3) I like the people I go to school with.
- (4) I am influenced by my family.
- (5) I would do what pleases my family, even if I detest that activity.
- (6) The wellbeing of my fellow students/workers is important to me.
- (7) I have a strong sense of national pride.
- (8) I respect those who are in authority.
- (9) I feel my life has a sense of purpose.
- (10) It is important for a child to learn to be independent and self-determined.
- (11) Abortion is never justifiable.
- (12) We should keep our aging parents with us at home.
- (13) I believe in life after death.
- (14) I consider myself a proper Buddhist.
- (15) I am a religious person.
- (16) Buddhism depends on blind faith.
- (17) I like to practise things from several different Buddhist traditions.
- (18) I believe that I can be a Buddhist without going to a Buddhist temple.
- (19) Doing meditation is sufficient as Buddhist practice.
- (20) Enjoying life or hating it depends on how we see the world.

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<sup>2</sup> Together with “immersion in temple ethos”

<sup>3</sup> The keywords included the words: arhat (Buddhism), Buddhism, Buddhism Theravada, Buddhist, Buddhist meditation, Burmese Buddhist temple, Dhammakaya meditation, Dhammakaya movement, Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, FWBO, Gautama Buddha, interbeing, Karma Kagyu, Mahayana, merit (Buddhism), New Kadampa Tradition, Order of Interbeing, Samatha, Soka Gakkai International SGI, Theravada, Theravada Buddhism, Theravada Buddhist, Tibetan Buddhism, Triratna Buddhist Community, Vietnamese Family of Buddhism, Vipassana, Vipassana meditation, Zen, Thich Nhat Hanh, Buddhism in Bangladesh, Buddhahood, Diamond Way Buddhism, Buddha’s Dharma, Pure Land Buddhism, Buddha’s Light International Association.

<sup>4</sup> Not possible where ethnicity was “mixed”

<sup>5</sup> A possible example of the Paths of accomplishment [*iddhipāda*] (D.iii.221) in practice, for which willingness [*chanda*] is the initial factor.