

# Buddhists' Health and Religious Practices\*

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## Introduction

- Research Needed
  - NonChristians
  - Interdisciplinary
  - Theoretical Foundation

# Methods

- Pilot study
- Interdisciplinary team
- Web Survey
- Theory-based
  - Buddhism
  - Health
  - Psychological characteristics
  - & Demographic questions
- Existing Questionnaires

# Health Questionnaire

- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Questionnaire 2000 & 2006
- National Health and Nutrition Survey Questionnaires, Examination Components and Laboratory Components 2005-2006
- National Health Interview Survey 2006 Adult Questionnaire
- Multifactor Screener in the 2000 NHIS Cancer Control Module

## Health Questions

- Self-rated health
- Medical and mental health history
- Utilization of medical care and preventive care
- Health insurance
- Disabilities and physical limitations
- Height and weight
- Smoking
- Physical activity
- Dietary intake
- Use of seat belts
- Intimate partner violence
- Social support

## Buddhism Questions

- Personal history with Buddhism
- Tradition practiced
- Beliefs
- Participation in organized activities
- Personal practices
- Socially-engaged

# Administration

- Recruitment
- August 1, 2007 to January 31, 2008
- 265 questions

# Results

- Participants = 1,237
  - Buddhists = 886
  - & Practitioners/believers

## Buddhist Demographic Characteristics

Age	47 years (SD = 12)
Gender	54% Female
Education	33% College Graduate 49% Graduate/Professional Degree
Annual Income	10% <\$20,000 40% \$20,000-\$59,999 44% \$60,000-\$149,999 7% >=\$150,000
Country of Residence	82% U.S.A. or territory
Race	90% White

## Buddhist Characteristics

Convert	86%	n*=883
Length of time practiced	12 yrs (SD = 10.66)	n=883
Exclusively one tradition	66%	n=748
Regularly attend meetings	58%	n=883
Practice Buddhist meditation	98%	n=740

\*Total number of responses to the Qs

# Health

Self-rated health	68%	n=718
Routine checkup	35%	n=740
Depressive disorder	37%	n=213
Anxiety disorder	30%	n=213
Could not afford meds/health care	25%	n=748



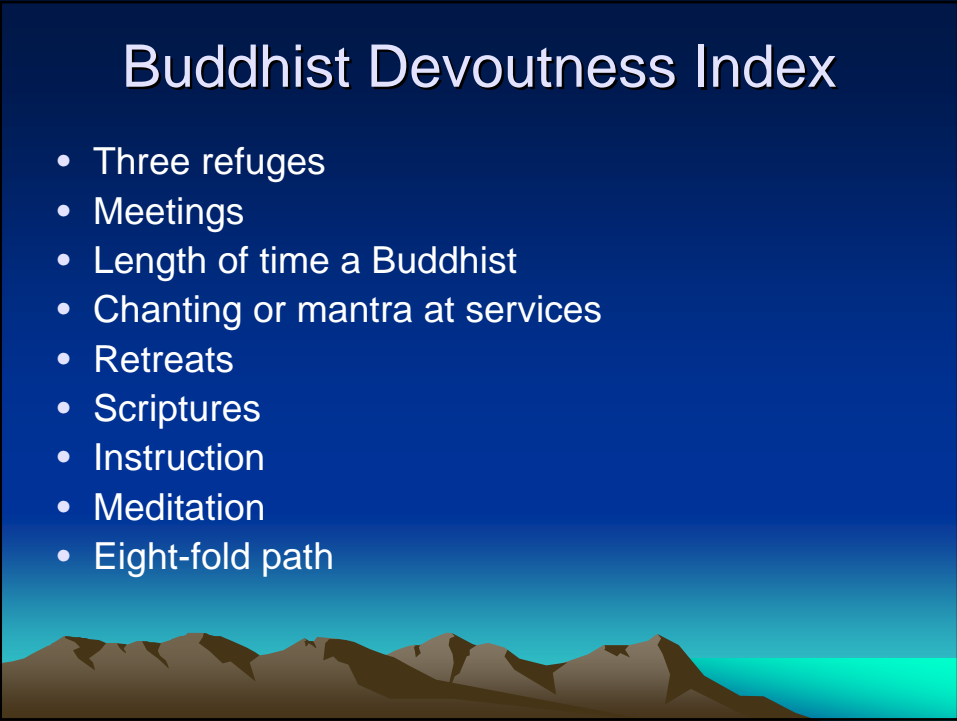
Leisure Physical activity	78%	n=688
Times per month	24.38 (SD =27.85)	
Minutes each time	55 (SD = 57.92)	
Current cigarette smoker	13%	n=381
Vegetarian diet	50%	n=678
Body-mass index	25.05 Kg/m <sup>2</sup> (SD = 5.32)	n=284
Servings of fruits & vegetables/day	3.30 (SD=0.99)	n=554
Percent energy from fat	33.47% (SD =3.07)	n=767



# Association Between Buddhist Religious Practices and Health



## Buddhist Devoutness Index

- Three refuges
  - Meetings
  - Length of time a Buddhist
  - Chanting or mantra at services
  - Retreats
  - Scriptures
  - Instruction
  - Meditation
  - Eight-fold path
- 

## Health Variables

- General health
- BMI
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Smoking
- Physical activity
- Vegetarian diet
- Fruit & vegetable intake
- Percent of diet from fat

## Devoutness & Health

Devoutness : Not a current smoker

OR = 1.53 (95% CI = 1.076, 2.196)

- Adjusted for Age, Gender, Income, Disability, Social support
- n=126

## Conclusions

- Largest known study of Buddhists
- Buddhists in study generally in good health
- Few direct associations between Buddhists' practices and health
- Buddhists in study are generally devout
- Web survey feasible
- Interdisciplinary team valuable
- Model applicable to future studies

## Study Limitations

- Convenience sample
- Self-selection
- Computer, Web literacy, access
- Language
- Missing data

# Future Research

- Survey representative sample
- Survey specific traditions
- In-person surveys & biomedical measures
- Survey other religions

