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Right View, Red Rust, and White Bones: A Reexamination of Buddhist Teachings on Female Inferiority

Allison A. Goodwin
College of Liberal Arts
National Taiwan University

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Right View, Red Rust, and White Bones: A Reexamination of Buddhist Teachings on Female Inferiority

Allison A. Goodwin¹

Abstract

Hundreds of psychological and social studies show that negative expectations and concepts of self and others, and discrimination based on the idea that a particular group is inferior to another, adversely affect those who discriminate as well as those who are subject to discrimination. This article argues that both genders are harmed by negative Buddhist teachings about women and by discriminatory rules that limit their authority, rights, activities, and status within Buddhist institutions. Śākyamuni Buddha's instructions in the *Tripitaka* for evaluating spiritual teachings indicate that because such views and practices have been proven to lead to harm, Buddhists should conclude that they are not the True *Dharma* and should abandon them.²

¹ Lecturer, College of Liberal Arts, National Taiwan University, Taipei. Email: allison.goodwin@cantab.net.

² This article is a significantly revised, more theoretically developed version of a paper presented in 2007 at the "International Conference on Religious Culture and Gender Ethics" in Taoyuan, Taiwan, and included in *Zongjiao wenhua yu xingbie lunli guoji xueshu*

How we believe the world is and what we honestly think it can become have powerful effects on how things turn out. (Rhem “Pygmalion In the Classroom”)

All phenomena are preceded by mind, ruled by mind, made by mind. (Śākyamuni Buddha *Dhammapada* I: 1-2)

To look down on others is an immeasurably great sin. . . . One who is in the habit of looking down on others has not got rid of the erroneous idea of a self (*wu wo bu duan* 吾我不斷), which shows a lack of merit. Because of egotism and a habitual contempt for others, s/he knows not the real essence of mind; and this shows a lack of virtue. (*Sūtra of Hui Neng* Part I, 72 & Part III, 89)³

Introduction

In speaking of Śākyamuni Buddha’s insistence that all spiritual teachings and practices must be closely investigated and tested, not blindly

huiyi lunwenji 宗教文化與性別倫理國際學術會議論文集, a Chinese language collection of selected essays from the conference, published in Taiwan in 2009. I would like to express my gratitude to the organizers and sponsors of the conference and to Hsuan Chuang University for providing the stimulus for this paper to be written; to The Blake-more Foundation for their financial and moral support; to The Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica for their institutional support; and to the family, friends, Buddhist teachers, and colleagues who provided invaluable comments on earlier drafts of this article. Special thanks are due to Marilyn Goodwin, Anne Goodwin Sides, and Daniel Cozort for their excellent editorial advice.

³ Price and Wong, trans. *The Diamond Sūtra and The Sūtra of Hui Neng* 72, 89. I have slightly altered Wong’s translation for the sake of clarity, based on two Chinese editions.

accepted, the Dalai Lama has often stated that if some *dharma*⁴ has been scientifically proven to be incorrect, the Buddhist belief would have to be abandoned. “There is no doubt,” he said on one such occasion, “that we must accept the results of scientific research. . . . When we investigate certain descriptions as they exist in our own texts, we find they do not correspond to reality. In such a case, we must accept the reality and not the literal scriptural explanation” (Piburn 60-62). Elsewhere, he has further cautioned, “If as spiritual practitioners we ignore the discoveries of science, our practice is impoverished, as this mind-set can lead to fundamentalism” (*Universe* 13).

The Dalai Lama’s statements are based on a number of teachings in the *Tripitaka* and later *sūtras* in which Śākyamuni Buddha establishes standards for evaluating spiritual teachings and practices—including his own—before one accepts them. In the *Tripitaka*, the Buddha repeatedly makes clear that his teachings are often misremembered, misrepresented, or misunderstood. This is one of his main reasons for outlining terms for investigating spiritual doctrine. He also states that false and inaccurate teachings and rules are among the causes and conditions that will lead to the decline and disappearance of the *Dharma*.⁵ According to the canonical literature, the criteria and methods

⁴ The Buddhist term *dharma(s)* (Sanskrit; *dhama(s)* in Pāli) is often used to refer specifically to the Buddhist doctrine or to individual Buddhist teachings and practices. However, the term can be very broad in scope. According to the Pāli Text Society (PTS) dictionary, its denotations include: cosmic or universal law(s), conditions, phenomena, things, mental phenomena, mentalities, states of mind, conditions, and moral conduct, qualities, and actions.

⁵ Much of the *Tripitaka* and later *sūtras* is devoted to detailed explanations of Right and Wrong View, and of the right and wrong way to think, speak, behave, practice, and teach. Such passages are far too numerous to list here. The following is a partial list of passages where the Buddha mentions false or distorted *dharma* or the decline or disappearance of the *Dharma*, or gives advice on how to evaluate teachers and their teachings. (The Buddha’s proposed methods for evaluating spiritual teachings are discussed at length later in this article).

Passages on false, distorted, misunderstood, or inaccurate *dharma*: *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, MN 22; *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, DN 16; *Anāpattivagga* 1-20, AN 1.150-169 [AN 1.12-1.20]; *Neyyatha Sutta* [*Bāla Sutta* 5], AN 2.25; *Kālāma Sutta*, AN 3.65; *Sugata Vinaya Sutta*, AN

for testing spiritual doctrine and practices that the Buddha proposes in such passages are those he hopes Buddhists will use in assessing Buddhist and other spiritual teachings. These methodologies will enable practitioners to determine whether spiritual teachings are true and therefore should be accepted and followed, or whether they are false and therefore should be abandoned.

The application of these standards to one of the most controversial issues in Buddhism today—teachings that women have more negative karma, and are inferior to men, and rules that limit women’s authority, rights, activities, and status within Buddhist institutions—has profound consequences for the religion. In evaluating the validity of these teachings and rules, one determines the most important practical aspects of Right View and The Middle Path⁶—how

4.160; *Mahāpadesā Sutta*, AN 4.180; *Anāgata-bhayani Sutta* 3, AN 5.79; *Thera Sutta*, AN 5.88; *Saddhammasammosa Suttas* 1-3, AN 5.154-156; *Satthusāsana Sutta*, AN 7.80 [AN 7.83]; *Gotamī Sutta*, AN 8.53; and *Saddhamma Paṭirūpaka Sutta*, SN 16.13. (A noteworthy discourse on this theme is also found in the *Mahāyāna Diamond Sūtra*, Part VI.)

On the decline or disappearance of the *Dharma*: DN 16; AN 1.150-169 [AN 1.12-1.20]; *Ajjhattika Sutta* [*Pamādādi Sutta* 2] 1-42, AN 1.98-139; AN 4.160; AN 5.79-5.80; AN 5.88; AN 5.154-156; *Aparihāna Suttas*, AN 6.32-6.33; *Kimila* [*Kimbila*] *Suttas*, AN 5.201, AN 6.40, and AN 7.56; *Bhikkhu Aparihānīya Suttas*, AN 7.21-27; *Upāsaka Aparihānīya Sutta* [*Parihāni Sutta* 2], AN 7.29/7.27; *Ovāda Suttas* 2-3, SN 16.7-8; SN 16.13; and *Āṇi Sutta*, SN 20.7. (For a discussion of early texts on the disappearance of Buddhism, see Chappell 122-154.)

On the qualities of true and worthy vs. false and unworthy teachers, and on the right and wrong way to practice and teach the *Dharma*: AN 1.98-1.139; AN 1.150-169 [AN 1.12-1.20]; AN 2.25; *Ājīvaka Sutta*, AN 3.72; AN 4.160; *Ṭhāna Sutta*, AN 4.192; *Hita Sutta*, AN 5.20; AN 5.79-5.80; AN 5.88; AN 5.154-156; *Udayi Sutta*, AN 5.159; *Gavesīn Sutta*, AN 5.180; AN 6.32-6.33; AN 6.40; AN 7.21-27; AN 7.56 [7.59]; *Kevaddha* [*Kevaṭṭa*] *Sutta*, DN 11; *Lohicca Sutta*, DN 12; MN 22; *Vīmaṃsaka Sutta*, MN 47; *Caṅkī Sutta*, MN 95; SN 16.6-8; SN 16.13; SN 20.7; and *Jatila Sutta*, Ud 6.2.

⁶ In Buddhist thought, Right View is a broad term that encompasses understanding, and having direct experience of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path (Middle Path), and all they comprise—*anattā* (*not-self*), impermanence, interconnectedness and interdependence, the law of cause and effect, emptiness, the true nature of reality, etc.—the wisdom, knowledge, and insight necessary to achieve full enlightenment. Right View determines how one should perceive and interact with all beings and phenomena. It calls for non-discrimination, equanimity, compassion, kindness, self-discipline, concentration, mindfulness, wisdom, and the abandonment of all attachment to, and identification with the five aggregates—especially concepts of inherently

the *Dharma* should be put into practice in day-to-day life, and how one should cultivate and conduct “body, speech, and mind” as one interacts with all human beings. Thus, one defines Buddhism itself.

Present-Day Buddhist Views and Treatment of Women

At present, the vast majority of Buddhist orders throughout Asia teach that women are inferior to men and have more weaknesses and karmic obstructions. These organizations also discriminate against women in rituals and policies, and so, through their words and actions, teach their followers and cultures to do the same. This is true even in the most liberal Buddhist sects in Taiwan and Korea, where nuns generally enjoy higher standing and better opportunities than in other Asian countries.⁷

Women’s educational levels and status have risen significantly in both countries over the past century, and nuns and laywomen now play an important day-to-day role in Buddhist orders, as teachers and practitioners. However, in monastic orders that accept members of both both genders in these countries, nuns generally cannot apply for, or hold, the highest-ranking positions of authority. They are also officially required to cede the positions they are allowed whenever a monk is present. Laywomen and nuns are routinely made to eat after men have eaten (that is, to eat their leftovers); to speak after men have spoken; to

existing/permanent/constant/independent selves and other(s). It is also the foundation of the Middle Path—the mental, bodily, and verbal conduct necessary for full enlightenment. See, for example, *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta*, MN 9; *Magga-Vibhaṅga Sutta*, SN 45.8; *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta*, MN 117; *Diṭṭi Sutta*, AN 10.93; *Micchatta Sutta*, AN 10.103; *Bīja Sutta*, AN 10.104; *Kaccāyanagotta Sutta*, SN 12.15; and *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, DN 22.

⁷ In both Taiwan and Korea today it is estimated that there are 20,000 (fully ordained) nuns (Tsomo “Buddist Nuns”). In Taiwan, nuns and laywomen far outnumber laymen and monks. According to Schak, women comprise approximately 70 percent of the lay practitioners in Taiwan, and nuns far outnumber monks in several of the most important orders in the country, such as Tzu Chi [Ci Ji] (which accepts only nuns), Dharma Drum Mountain, Fo Guang Shan, and Lingjiushan (Schak 154).

sit, walk, and stand behind monks and laymen in ceremonies, rituals, classes, and retreats; and to chant, study, and teach *sūtras* that contain disparaging messages about women. In *Dharma* classes, and in books written by Buddhist leaders, it is taught that women have more negative qualities and heavier karmic burdens/obstructions (業障) than men, and therefore that they cannot become Buddhas.⁸ (However, it is usually taught that they can become *arahants*). In some orders, the Eight *Garudhammas*—a set of rules in the *Tripitaka* that limit nuns' authority and status and place them under the control of the monks' order—are followed to the letter. Nuns are made to bow down to monks' feet, and even the most senior nuns are required to kowtow to monks who have just been initiated.⁹

Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna teachings make clear that one should view sentient beings equally, without discriminating among them—a view that is especially emphasized in such important Mahāyāna texts as *The Huayan (Flower Ornament) Sūtra*, *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra*,

⁸ The writings of Master Sheng Yan 聖嚴, the founder of Dharma Drum Mountain (法鼓山), provide examples of what, in the world of Orthodox Taiwanese Buddhism today, are considered to be progressive Buddhist teachings on “female inferiority.” See Sheng Yan 聖嚴 *Lüzhi shenghuo*; *Xue fo qūn yi* 246-249; and *Zheng xin fojiao* 118 (page 87 in the English version). See also Learman; Shih 釋昭慧 “Theory and Practice” 131-143; Schak 145-174; Tsai; and Woo 228.

⁹ The account presented here of the status of women in Buddhist orders in contemporary Taiwan and Korea is based on the following sources: “An American Encounter”; E. Cho; Han; Learman; Schak 145-174; Shih “Theory and Practice” 131-143; Shih “*Nüxing jiaoyü*” 67-74; Tsai; and Woo 207-234. It is also based on correspondence with Professor Eun-su Cho regarding her current research on contemporary Korean Buddhist attitudes toward women, and on my own fieldwork in Taiwan between 2006 and 2009, which included interviews with over seventy Taiwanese Buddhists. Those I interviewed frequently responded to questions about the special rules and negative teachings about women by stating that women did indeed have more flaws and karmic obstructions than men, and that any concern with such matters was an attachment and an obstacle to spiritual practice. Some added critical remarks, or warned that any who were concerned about the unequal rules and negative teachings would never become enlightened, or would have the “bad fate” of being reborn as women in future lives.

Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, *Lotus Sūtra*, and *Diamond Sūtra*.¹⁰ Yet even in Taiwan, where nuns' status is highest, and where nuns and laywomen far outnumber monks and laymen, only two leaders of orthodox Buddhist sects, Master Yin Shun (印順), and Master Xing Yun (星雲) of Buddha's Light International (佛光山), have publicly rejected even part of the Eight *Garudhammas* and other rules and teachings that imply that women are inferior to men and should be treated as such. Few other Buddhists in the country have made such public statements, or given vocal support to equal rights, opportunities, or status for women.¹¹

Research projects that David Schak, Linda Learman, and I conducted in Taiwan over the past decade found that negative views of women were commonplace. Prevalent stereotypes, which strongly resemble statements attributed to Śākyamuni in the *Tripitāka* and other *sūtras*, include the views that women are evil, weak, jealous, vain, ignorant, deceitful, short-tempered, sharp-tongued, given to complaining, more attached, less intelligent, less capable, and have more karmic obstructions than men.¹² My own interviews with dozens of

¹⁰ Some would contend that Theravāda Buddhism does not teach non-discrimination. However, that view is belied by a number of passages in the *Tripitāka* in which the Buddha and others insist that the uprooting of all discriminatory views, distinctions, and self/other concepts is essential to awakening. See, for example, *Samiddhi Sutta*, SN 1.20; *Somā Sutta*, SN 5.2; *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, MN 22; *Aggi Vacchagotta Sutta*, MN 72; *Kālakā Sutta*, AN 4.24; *Kokanuda Sutta*, AN 10.96; *Duṭṭhatṭhaka Sutta*, Snp 4.3; *Suddhatṭhaka Sutta*, Snp 4.4; *Paramatṭhaka Sutta*, Snp 4.5; and *Māgaṇḍiya Sutta*, Snp 4.9. This idea is also developed in the *Nidāna Saṃyutta* in the *Nidāna Vagga* (SN 12.1-12.93) and in the *Khandha Vagga* (SN 22.1-22.159) in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, where the Buddha emphasizes that one should not identify any of the five aggregates as *self* or *other*, or contemplate the superiority or inferiority of *self* or *other*, but rather should see such phenomena, like all conditioned things, as interconnected, interdependent, inconstant processes that are *not-self/other*.

¹¹ Notable Taiwanese Buddhists who have spoken out openly in favor of gender equality include Shih Chao-hwei 釋昭慧, Shih Chuan-dao 釋傳道, Christie (Yü-ling) Chang 張玉玲博士, and Yu-chen Li 李玉珍博士.

¹² Learman 85; Schak 155-161; Sheng Yan *Xue fo qūn yi* 246-249; Sheng Yan *Zheng xin fojiao* 118; Shih "Theory and Practice" 121-143; Shih "Nüxing jiaoyü" 67-74; Tsai; and Woo 207-234; and based on my own interviews. Even Xing Yun, a Taiwanese Buddhist leader known for championing Buddhist women's rights, has publicly commented that women

Taiwanese Buddhist nuns, monks, and laypeople, conducted between 2006 and 2009 at retreats and *Dharma* and meditation classes, confirmed that a majority held at least some of these views and believed that Śākyamuni established special rules to constrain women due to their alleged shortcomings.

The Taiwanese culture is changing quickly, however, and many, if not most, young people do not hold these negative views of women. There is also a growing consciousness within the Buddhist community that these negative teachings and unequal rules should be abandoned. As women's empowerment in the country increases, it seems inevitable that the numbers of Buddhists who support gender equality will also rise. When such practitioners become willing to make their views known, the status and rights of Taiwanese Buddhist nuns and laywomen may well rapidly improve.

In the majority of Mahāyāna traditions elsewhere in Asia, the same negative teachings and special rules for women continue to be observed and taught. Nuns and laywomen generally have lower status and fewer opportunities for education and promotion, and receive less financial and institutional support than their male counterparts. In many Buddhist lineages women also make up only a small minority of monastics and *Dharma* teachers.

In the Tibetan tradition, the full ordination of nuns has not been officially sanctioned because it is widely believed the nuns' lineage was never officially established in Tibet, and because, according to a rule in the *Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya*, ten fully ordained nuns and ten fully ordained monks of an unbroken lineage of transmission must be present

are often "small-minded, limited in their intellectual reach, and lacking in wisdom" (Woo 228).

in order for a nun to be fully ordained.¹³ The Dalai Lama has encouraged nuns in the Tibetan tradition to receive full ordination from Chinese Mahāyāna lineages, and a small number of nuns have taken full *bhikkhunī* vows, but most are still ordained only as novices. Under the Tibetan monastic system, women have also often been excluded from higher empowerments and teachings, and relegated to nunneries that have provided only rudimentary training, though this is beginning to change, thanks to the work of many liberal monastics and laypeople, and leaders such as the Dalai Lama.

Efforts to reestablish the full ordination of nuns and eliminate discriminatory teachings and practices have made some progress in recent years, and the Dalai Lama and many other lamas have played important roles in this process. The Dalai Lama has made numerous public statements advocating reform, including a message to the Fourth International Conference of Buddhist Women in 1995, which stressed that discrimination against women and other groups must be abandoned because it causes harm.¹⁴ In 2010, the Seventeenth Gyalwang Karmapa,

¹³ Several highly respected Buddhist scholars, including the Eighth Karmapa, Mikyö Dorje (one of Tibet's greatest *Vinaya* scholars), Ajahn Brahm, Bhikkhu Bodhi, and Mingun Jetavan Sayadaw, have argued that another reading of the monastic rules in the *Tripitaka* indicates that the Buddha left open the possibility for the ordination of *bhikkhunīs* by a monk or group of monks (Bodhi; Damcho; and Horayangura). Recently uncovered records also indicate that Mikyö Dorje and several other great Tibetan masters gave full ordination to female disciples (Damcho).

¹⁴ His message reads: "It is the nature of human beings to yearn for freedom, equality and dignity. If we accept that others have a right to peace and happiness equal to our own, do we not have a responsibility to help those in need? All human beings, whatever their cultural or historical background, suffer when they are intimidated, imprisoned, tortured, or discriminated against. The question of human rights is so fundamentally important that there should be no difference of views on this. Our rich diversity of cultures and traditions should help to strengthen fundamental human rights in all communities. Mere tradition can never justify violations of human rights. Thus, discrimination against persons of a different race, against women, and against weaker sections of society may be traditional in some places, but because they are inconsistent with universally recognized human rights, these forms of behavior should change. The universal principal of the equality of all human beings must take precedence" ("Greetings").

the spiritual leader of the Karma Kagyu lineage, went further still to announce that he is committed to improving women's rights and status, and to fully ordaining women as *bhikkhunīs* in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition (Damcho). Other Tibetan leaders have expressed a desire to improve women's status, but most appear to have more conservative agendas for achieving this. As these developments reveal, Tibetan Buddhism is moving incrementally towards greater gender equality. But at present, negative beliefs about women, and unequal rules and practices remain prevalent, and continue to be widely perpetuated.¹⁵

In Buddhist orders in the West, sexism was once a considerable problem. But today approximately half of the teachers and leaders of Western Buddhist groups are women, and the vast majority of Western Buddhists (including many Asians) view women and men equally and treat them as such. Most see the unequal rules and negative teachings about women as unacceptable in a modern context, and either reject them as false *Dharma* or believe they arose due to the influence of androcentric/misogynist social forces in or after the Buddha's time—rather than due to the Buddha's own predilections. A majority of the lineages in Asia with which most Western groups are affiliated, however, remain patriarchal and maintain fundamentalist interpretations of the unequal rules and negative teachings about women. Many recent Asian immigrants preserve the views and rules of those lineages.¹⁶ Due to these influences and those of a number of teachers who originally transmitted the Buddhist *Dharma* in these countries, sexism persists in some organizations. In such groups, conflicts and disillusionment over

¹⁵ The account of the present-day position of women in Tibetan Buddhism presented in this article is based on the following sources: J. Campbell; Damcho; Deitch Rohrer; Fenn and Koppedprayer; Gross *Buddhism After Patriarchy* 79-114; Gross "Is the Glass Half-Empty?" 291-311; Gutschow; Khandu Lama; Mackenzie; Palmo; and Tsomo "Buddhist Nuns."

¹⁶ Cadge 777-793; Gregory 248-249; Gross "How American Women Are Changing Buddhism"; Gross "Is the Glass Half-Empty?" 291-311; and Prebish and Tanaka.

discriminatory teachings and rules, and the unequal, at times exploitative treatment of nuns and laywomen remain common. All this will no doubt continue to affect the development of Buddhism in these countries.¹⁷

Unequal rules and negative views of women are most conservatively interpreted and practiced in Buddhist orders in Theravāda Buddhist countries. Though it is estimated that there are over 80,000 nuns in these countries at present, in all but Sri Lanka the full ordination of women is forbidden. Despite efforts to transform attitudes and improve Buddhist women's status, Theravāda nuns (who observe eight, nine, or ten precepts) are not even recognized as *srāmanerikā* (novice nuns), or considered to be members of the monastic community, except in Sri Lanka. As in much of Asia, nuns receive less respect, training, and material support than monks. In Theravāda countries, they also have little or no chance of advancement. It is commonly taught that females cannot reach enlightenment and must be reborn as males in order to succeed in their practice. Women and girls are often barred from entering sacred shrines and temples, and in some countries any monk who even supports the ordination of women is subject to severe punishment, which may include expulsion from his order.¹⁸

It is well known that negative views of women and rules limiting them were well established in India, in Brahmanism and in the culture at

¹⁷ The account presented here of attitudes toward women in present-day Buddhist groups in the West is based on the following sources: Cadge 777-793; Fields *How the Swans Came to the Lake*; Gregory 233-263; Gross *Buddhism After Patriarchy* 218-255; Gross "Helping the Iron Bird Fly" 238-252; Gross "How American Women Are Changing Buddhism"; Gross "Is the Glass Half-Empty?" 291-311; Hughes Seager 47, and 185-200; Prebish *Luminous Passage* 51-93; and Tworkhov.

¹⁸ The account of the present-day status of women in Theravāda Buddhist countries presented in this article is based on the following sources: Fenn and Koppedraayer; Kawanami 159-171; Khuankaew 22-26; Klunklin and Greenwood 46-61; Laohavanich 49-120; Lindberg Falk "*Thammarini Witthaya*" 62-64; Lindberg Falk *Making Fields of Merit*; Mettanando *After the Buddha*; Tewari; Tomalin 385-397; Tsomo "Buddist Nuns"; Tsomo "Lao Buddhist Women"; Vanna; and Vichit-Vadakan 515-524.

large, before, during, and after the time of the Buddha. They continue to be common in other patriarchal Eastern spiritual traditions, such as Confucianism, Daoism, Shintoism, and ancestor worship. Most of the *Tripitaka* and later *sūtras* were first written down hundreds of years after the Buddha's *Parinibbāna*. It is not surprising that deprecatory attitudes toward women and rules restricting them should have occasionally been added to the Buddhist canon, right alongside highly positive and equitable ones—just as misogynist views and rules have appeared in the scriptures of many, if not most, ancient world religions that also revere women.

Scholars of religion have often commented that this latter phenomenon must be due in part to the fact that physical might has historically been valued over other human qualities because of its importance to the establishment of military and political power. Men have occupied positions of authority that allowed them to control the process of compiling, editing, and interpreting religious doctrine. Some have belittled women to enhance their own status, or have projected blame for their own desires or shortcomings onto women, vilifying them in an attempt to extinguish or externalize those longings or weaknesses. (The Buddha, in fact, makes the latter point in the Mahāyāna *Ḍṛdhādhyāśayaparipṛccha Sūtra* and “The Tale of King Udayana of Vatsa” from the *Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra*. There, he warns men who find fault with women that they should “first know a man’s faults,” and that any man who perceives women as impure is like one aroused by the illusion of a woman conjured in a magic show, who blames the apparition for his desires.)¹⁹ Special constraints and denigrating

¹⁹ In “The Tale of King Udayana of Vatsa” (*Udayanavatsarājaparivartaḥ*—a *sūtra* from the Mahāyāna *Mahāratnakūṭa*), King Udayana complains to the Buddha: “Lord, because of woman’s deception, I am perplexed and ignorant. For this reason I have intense hate. Lord, because you bring peace and benefits to living beings, I want you to explain, out of compassion, the flattery and deceit of women. Do not let me have close relationships with women. Then, after a long time, I will be able to avoid all suffering...” [The Buddha] answers: “Put aside these actions. Why don’t you ask about what is important and

attitudes toward women no doubt also arose due to other “causes and conditions,” such as social conditioning, and the effects of the male hormone testosterone, which increases the desire for status.²⁰

Due to a variety of influences, attitudes toward women in many Asian Buddhist countries have become more liberal over the past century, and they continue to evolve, though generally more slowly than in the West. Buddhist activists and progressive Buddhist leaders and organizations in both East and West are playing important roles in this process, which is gradually transforming beliefs about women in many Buddhist orders. The irony is that highly positive and equitable views of women are not new to Buddhism. They’ve been an integral part of Buddhist teachings and stories in *sūtras* from the *Tripitaka* onward.

Buddhist Scriptural Attitudes Toward Women and the Current Scholarly Debate

The scriptural account of the Buddha’s attitude toward women is conveyed through teachings and stories found throughout the *Tripitaka* and later texts, and it is implicit in many of the most fundamental *Dharma* principles. Among the former passages, the *Mahāvachchagotta Sutta*, *Somā Sutta*, and stories in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* and the *Mahāyāna Dṛdhādhyāśayapariṣccha Sūtra* are of particular significance for the insights they provide on the subject, and for the fact that they

not about extraneous matters?... Your majesty should first know a man’s faults. Then he’ll have insight into those of a woman.... Because all men engage in four kinds of wrong and excessive actions, they are perplexed by women” (*Mahāratnakūṭa* assembly 29, T v. 11, n. 310, XI pp. 543-547, trans. Paul in *Women in Buddhism* (29). The *Dṛdhādhyāśayapariṣccha Sūtra* passage is cited later in this article.

²⁰ For recent studies on the relationship between testosterone levels and a desire for status, see Josephs et al. 158-163; and Newman, Guinn Sellers, and Josephs 205-211.

contradict some of the most influential negative Buddhist teachings about women.²¹

In a conversation with the wanderer Vacchagotta recorded in the *Mahāvachchagotta Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha implies that his female and male followers are equal in accomplishment: “far more” than five hundred of his nuns, and “far more” than five hundred of his monks have already been enlightened. “[F]ar more” than five hundred laywomen, and “far more” than five hundred laymen “with the destruction of the five lower fetters, will reappear spontaneously [in the Pure Abodes] and there attain final *Nibbāna* without ever returning from that world” (*Mahāvachchagotta Sutta*, MN 73).²² Throughout the passage, Śākyamuni uses exactly the same language and (equal) numbers to describe the spiritual attainments of his female and male disciples at various levels of the discipline—contradicting statements attributed to him elsewhere in the *Tripitāka*, that women are less able than men (*Kamboja Sutta*, AN 4.80), and incapable of achieving enlightenment (*Bahudhātuka Sutta*, MN 115 and *Aṭṭhāna Sutta 12*, AN 1.279). Vacchagotta responds approvingly that if nuns, monks, laywomen, and laymen alike were not accomplished, the “holy life would be deficient in that respect.” Satisfied by the Buddha’s account of his disciples’ progress, that the Buddha’s *Dharma* is not flawed, Vacchagotta—who had often approached the Buddha to ask questions, but had not yet decided to become his disciple—finally decides to request ordination.

²¹ These and many other passages that offer insights into the early *sangha*’s attitudes toward women are discussed in some detail in the following excellent articles and books: An 7-34; Anālayo “Women’s Renunciation” 65-98; Anālayo “*Chos sbyin gyi mdo*”; Auer Falk 155-165; Gross *Buddhism After Patriarchy* 48-54; Horner; Laohavanich 49-120; Mettanando *After the Buddha*; Sponberg 3-36; Sujato “A Painful Ambiguity” C1-C15; Sujato *White Bones*; and Wilson. Attitudes toward women in the Mahāyāna *sūtras* are discussed in some detail in Paul “Buddhist Attitudes” 63-71; Paul *Women in Buddhism*; Gross *Buddhism After Patriarchy* 55-77; and Wilson.

²² MN 73, trans. Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi *The Middle Length Discourses* 595-602/i490- i497.

Anālayo’s insightful 2010 article on women’s renunciation in early Buddhism cites the above and a number of other passages in early Buddhist texts which, together, convey that the Buddha and many others saw laywomen and the nuns’ order—as they saw each of the four assemblies—as integral parts of the *sangha*, essential to the *Dharma*’s completeness, survival, and success.²³ Anālayo notes that, according to one of these passages—a discourse in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* in the *Dīgha Nikāya* (DN 16, Part III.7)—Śākyamuni resolves immediately after becoming enlightened that he will not pass away until he has founded and thoroughly prepared the four assemblies of his disciples (nuns, monks, laywomen, and laymen):²⁴ he accords the four groups equal respect, importance, and responsibility for practicing, teaching, and ensuring the continuance of the *Dharma* after the Buddha’s passing. Anālayo also points to several other *suttas* that show that the Buddha held great respect for all four assemblies, and placed the highest importance on their mutual respect for one another. According to discourses recorded in the *Kimballa Suttas* in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (AN 5.201, AN 6.40, and AN 7.56), Śākyamuni in fact states that the four assemblies’ respect for one another is among the requisite conditions for the continuance of the *Dharma* after his *Parinibbāna*.²⁵

²³ Anālayo “Women’s Renunciation” 65-72.

²⁴ Anālayo “Women’s Renunciation” 65-67. Anālayo comments that, according to a version of the passage found in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* of the (*Mūla*-)*sarvāstivāda Vinaya*, preserved in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese, the Buddha made this vow immediately after he became enlightened (66). A translation of the passage by Vajra and Story reads: “I shall not come to my final passing away ... until my *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*, laymen and laywomen, have come to be true disciples—wise, well disciplined, self-confident, and learned, preservers of the *Dhamma*, living according to the *Dhamma*, abiding by the appropriate conduct, and having learned the Master’s word, are able to expound it, preach it, proclaim it, establish it, reveal it, explain it in detail, and make it clear; until, when adverse opinions [or false teachings] arise, they shall be able to refute them thoroughly and well, and to preach this convincing and liberating *Dhamma*” (Access to Insight).

²⁵ Anālayo “Women’s Renunciation” 70. Anālayo also cites passages in which the Buddha states that he expects the four assemblies to serve as “the community’s illuminations” (*Sobhana Sutta*, AN 4.7) and as an inspiration to each other (*Samyukta Āgama* 1080;

In many passages elsewhere in the *Tripitaka* and later texts, the Buddha and others express unequivocally favorable views of women, praising female disciples for their abilities, accomplishments, and strengths. Numerous stories also depict nuns and laywomen as learned, virtuous, exceptional, and wise—as capable as male disciples of practicing and teaching the *Dharma* and achieving full awakening.²⁶

A series of narratives in the *Bhikkhunī Saṃyutta* (SN 5.1-10) in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* describe ten episodes in which Māra (the Tempter/Devil) attempts to lure a nun into losing concentration as she meditates by appealing to desires or weaknesses that, according to other early canonical accounts, the Buddha pronounced to be among women’s shortcomings. In each case, thanks to her wisdom, accomplishment, and correct understanding of the *Dharma*, the nun undermines Māra’s efforts, simultaneously demonstrating the inaccuracy of the negative views of women that Māra implicitly or explicitly expresses.

In the *Somā Sutta* (SN 5.2), the second of these passages, Māra taunts the nun *Somā* that a woman “with her two-fingered wisdom” cannot attain enlightenment. *Somā* counters that not only is gender irrelevant—it has no effect on one’s spiritual practice or potential (an assertion that echoes Śākyamuni’s assessments of caste)²⁷—identification

and *Ekottarika Āgama* 23.1), and where the Buddha indicates that, as recipients of gifts or teachings, the monks and nuns together constitute a superior field of merit than the order of monks alone (*Dakkhiṇāvibhanga Sutta*, MN 142.7; and *Madhyama Āgama* 180).

²⁶ Such passages appear with particular frequency in the Pāli *Therīgāthā*. The following articles provide detailed discussions of both highly positive and negative teachings about women in early Buddhism: Anālayo “Women’s Renunciation” 65-77; Anālayo “*Chos sbyin gyi mdo*”; Auer Falk 161-165; Gross *Buddhism After Patriarchy* 48-54; Horner; Laohavanich 49-120; Mettanando *After the Buddha*; and Sponberg 3-36.

²⁷ In the following *sūtras* Śākyamuni implies that caste is irrelevant to those engaged in spiritual practice, as it has no effect on one’s spiritual abilities or potential: *Kaṇṇakathala Sutta*, MN 90; *Assalāyana Sutta*, MN 93; *Loka Sutta*, SN 3.23; *Vaccha Sutta*, AN 3.57; *Pansadhovaka Sutta*, AN 3.100/3.101; *Issattha Sutta*, SN 3.24; and Sunita the Outcaste, Thag 12.2.

with gender, or with “anything at all,” is a distraction and a serious obstacle on the spiritual path:

What does womanhood matter at all
 When the mind is concentrated well,
 When knowledge flows on steadily
 As one sees correctly into *Dhamma*.

One to whom it might occur,
 ‘I’m a woman’ or ‘I’m a man’
 Or ‘I’m anything at all’—
 Is fit for Māra to address.

(*Somā Sutta*, SN 5.2).²⁸

As in the other stories in the *Bhikkhunī Saṃyutta*, here again, it is an accomplished female practitioner who debunks Māra’s dismissive assessments of women’s spiritual potential, and simultaneously shows that she does not possess several other weaknesses attributed to women in the Buddhist canon. *Somā*’s apt and dispassionate response condenses a good part of one of the most essential teachings in Buddhist literature—the doctrine of *anattā/anātman/not-self*—into a deceptively simple line of verse: to attain enlightenment (and to progress far on the spiritual path) one must abandon identification with the five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness)—including all concepts—especially those of inherently existing selves and other(s) (*attā/ātman*).²⁹

In the *Dr̥dhādhyāśayapariṇccha Sūtra*, the Buddha makes a related point: negative views of women and others, and the belief that women—

²⁸ SN 5.2, trans. Bodhi *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha* 222-223.

²⁹ This doctrine is discussed repeatedly throughout the *Tripitaka*, and is especially highlighted in the *Khandha Saṃyutta in the Khandha Vagga* (SN 22.1-159) and the *Nidāna Saṃyutta in the Nidāna Vagga of the Saṃyutta Nikāya* (SN 12.1-93).

or any beings at all—are unwholesome or responsible for the feelings they incite, are mental fabrications and forms of attachment, projected by the perceiver upon imagined others that do not inherently exist. The problem lies not in the perceived, but in the mind of the perceiver: anyone who even “contemplates the impurity of an entity that has never arisen and never existed” is not “practicing the path.” It is a powerful indictment of those who hold exactly the sorts of negative views of women attributed to the Buddha elsewhere:

[The Buddha:] “Suppose a certain man goes to a magic show. The magician creates a magical woman, and, seeing her, desire arises in the man. Due to the mind of desire he becomes anxious and fretful, and, rising from his seat, he leaves. He leaves and contemplates the impurity of that woman. . . . Now what do you think, O Son of Good Family, has that man done the right thing, or has he done the wrong?” “Lord, anyone who contemplates the impurity of a nonexistent woman . . . has done the wrong thing.” The Lord spoke, “O Son of Good Family, in this [same way] whatever monk or nun, or layman, or laywoman contemplates the impurity of an entity that has never arisen and never existed . . . has made a similar [mistake]. I would not say that such a foolish person is practicing the path.”³⁰

The highly respectful, non-discriminatory, and positive messages about women and their position in the *sangha* communicated in the above and many other passages in the *Tripitaka* and later texts, strongly contradict statements and rules found in discourses that are among the most important sources of negative Buddhist attitudes towards women, and of special rules limiting them. These include views so virulent they

³⁰ *Ḍṛdhādhyāśayapariṣccha Sūtra*, trans. Cabezón in “Women and Illusion” 10, cited in Sponberg 23.

raise the eyebrows of many contemporary readers. Among them are statements like the following from the *Tripitaka*, all attributed to the Buddha: “It is impossible that a woman should be a perfect rightfully Enlightened One” (MN 115 and AN 1.279). “It is impossible . . . it cannot come to pass, that the Truth-finder should allow greeting, rising up for, salutation, and proper duties towards women. . . . [W]hoever should do so incurs an offence of wrongdoing” (*Vinayapitaka* (PTS), Vol. V, *Cullavagga* X, 3, p. 358). “Women are . . . easily angered . . . envious . . . greedy . . . weak in wisdom” (*Kamboja [Kosambiya] Sutta* (PTS), AN II 82-83/AN 4.80). “Women are the stain of the holy life” (*Devatāsaṃyutta*, SN 1.58). Woman is “filthy, stinking, cowardly, terrifying, and betrays friends. . . .” Like a “black snake . . . she is aggressive, bears grudges, has terrible poison, is fork-tongued” (*Pañhamakaḍḍhasappa Sutta* and *Dutiyakaḍḍhasappasutta Sutta*, AN 5.229-230).³¹ Women are “wholly a snare of [the Tempter/Devil] Māra” (*Mātāputta Sutta* (PTS), AN III 67/AN 5.55).³²

One of the most influential of these sorts of passages—in good part because it also establishes special rules that relegate women to second-class status within the *sangha*—is the account of the origin of the nuns’ order (*bhikkhuni*) in the *Vinaya* ((PTS), Vol. V, *Cullavagga* X, 2.1-3, p. 354-356), also found in the *Gotamī Sutta* (AN 8.51) in the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*. In that story, Śākyamuni indicates that he disapproves of women’s ordination. He refuses three times to ordain his own maternal aunt and adoptive mother, Mahāprajāpatī Gotamī, and only reluctantly relents

³¹ MN 115 and AN 1.279, trans. Sister Upalavanna, Metta Net; SN 1.58 [1.198], trans. Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi *The Middle Length Discourses* 129; AN 5.229-230, trans. Sujato *White Bones* 217.

³² Patently misogynist messages about women such as these appear relatively infrequently in the Pāli Canon, but are more common in certain of the Mahāyāna texts, particularly the (originally noncanonical) *Jātaka Tales* (Sponberg 21). For a discussion of misogynist attitudes in Mahāyāna texts, see Gross *Buddhism After Patriarchy* 55-77; Paul “Buddhist Attitudes” 63-71; Paul *Women in Buddhism*; and Wilson.

after the third request by his attendant, Ānanda.³³ He then establishes the Eight *Garudhammas*—the preconditions for women’s ordination. The Buddha goes on to liken women to “red rust” and “white bones,” pestilences that infest rice and sugar cane fields—they will quickly destroy any religion they enter. He further predicts that because he has ordained a woman, Buddhism will die out in five hundred years instead of a thousand. The rules, as they appear in I. B. Horner’s translations of the *Mahāvihāravāsin Vinaya*, are:

1. A nun who has been ordained (even) for a hundred years must greet respectfully, rise up, bow down, salute with joined palms, and do proper homage to each and every monk—even those ordained that very day. This rule is to be honored, respected, revered, venerated, never to be transgressed during her life. [In other words, all nuns must bow down to all monks as their seniors and superiors. Monks show respect to each other according to seniority, or the length of time they have been ordained. According to the *Cullavagga* passage cited earlier, monks incur an offence of wrongdoing if they bow down to nuns (*Cullavagga* X, 3, p. 358 (PTS)).]

2. A nun must not spend the rains retreat (*Vassa*) in a residence where there is no monk. This rule too is to be honored, etc. . . . never to be transgressed during her life. [A monk may live independently.]

³³ As Bernard Faure has pointed out, in the *Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya* version of the story, the episode also raises doubts because the Buddha’s change of mind “is not presented as stemming from his realization of the truth of Ānanda’s point, but from his desire to avoid disturbing his disciple’s peace of mind. He allegedly reflect[s] as follows: ‘If I reject [the request formulated] three times by Ānanda, his mind will be disturbed and will come to confuse things that have been taught to him. It is better if my true *Dhamma* lasts only five hundred years and if the mind of Ānanda, son of Gautamī, is not disturbed’” (Faure 59).

3. Every fortnight a nun should await two things from the order of monks: the asking (as to the date) of the Observance day (*Uposatha*), and the time (when the monks will come) to give the Exhortation (*Ovāda*/instruction). This rule too is to be honored, etc. . . . never to be transgressed during her life. [This rule requires nuns to regularly seek instruction from the community of monks, and to recite monastic rules and confess transgressions before them. Monks do not have to recite rules or confess transgressions before nuns, nor are they required to receive any instruction.]

4. After the rains-retreat a nun must offer herself up for *Pavāranā* (an enquiry as to whether or not any fault can be laid to her charge, where she must ask for forgiveness/admonishment for violations of the monastic code) before both orders in respect to three matters: what was seen, what was heard, what was suspected. This rule too is to be honored, etc. . . . never to be transgressed during her life. [Monks only present themselves to the community of monks for forgiveness/admonishment.]

5. A nun who has been guilty of a serious offence must undergo *Mānattā* (penance/discipline) for half a month, with reinstatement requiring approval from both orders. This rule too is to be honored, etc. . . . never to be transgressed during her life. [Monks do not require approval from the nuns for their reinstatement.]

6. A woman may be ordained only after two years of training in the six rules, and she must seek full ordination from both orders. This rule too is to be honored, etc. . . . never to be transgressed during her life. [Men are not subject to

any mandatory postlancy, and their ordination is sanctioned and performed only by monks.]

7. A monk must not be abused or reviled in any way by a nun. This rule too is to be honored, etc. . . . never to be transgressed during her life.

8. From this day forward, the admonition or criticism of monks by nuns is forbidden; admonition or criticism of nuns by monks is not forbidden. This rule too is to be honored, etc. . . . never to be transgressed during her life. [The *Tripitaka* does not restrict those whom a monk may criticize or admonish.]

Upon Mahāpajāpati Gotamī's acceptance of the *Garudhammas*, the Buddha continues:

If, Ānanda, women had not obtained the going forth from home into homelessness in the *Dhamma* and discipline proclaimed by the Truth-finder, the *Dhamma* would have lasted long. The true *Dhamma* would have endured for a thousand years. But because women have gone forth . . . in the *Dhamma* and discipline proclaimed by the Truth-finder, now the *Dhamma* will not last long. The true *Dhamma* will endure only for five hundred years. Even, Ānanda, as those households which have many women and few men easily fall prey to robbers, to pot-thieves . . . in whatever *dhamma* and discipline women obtain the going forth . . . that *dhamma* will not last long. Even as when the disease known as white bones (mildew) attacks a whole field of rice, that field of rice does not last long, even so, in whatever *dhamma* and discipline women obtain the going forth . . . that *dhamma* will not last long.

Even as when the disease known as red rust attacks a whole field of sugar-cane, that field of sugar-cane will not last long, even so, in whatever *dhamma* and discipline women obtain the going forth . . . that *dhamma* will not last long. Even as a man, looking forward, may build a dyke to a great reservoir so that the water may not overflow, even so, were the Eight *Garudhammas* for the nuns laid down by me, looking forward, not to be transgressed during their lives.”³⁴

The belief that the True *Dharma* died out over two thousand years ago as a result of the Buddha’s decision to allow women to be ordained is surprisingly common in Buddhist communities throughout the East. But given the well-documented, constructive role that women have played in the practice, teaching, and transmission of the *Dharma*, including during the Buddha’s lifetime, the Buddha’s alleged prediction has been far from accurate. Women today are vital to Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna Buddhist communities in Asia and the West—among them the flourishing Mahāyāna Buddhist communities in Taiwan, where women make up the majority of monastics, *Dharma* teachers, and students. Other ancient religions—including Protestant Christianity, non-Orthodox Judaism, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Shintoism, and Daoism—have shown no signs of weakening as a result of having allowed women to become fully ordained and take on positions of leadership.

There are a number of versions of the *Garudhammas*, which differ somewhat in the details and severity of the rules prescribed. In various times and cultures, these and other gender-based rules have no doubt been understood and practiced differently. However, in every

³⁴ Horner, trans. *Vinayapīṭaka* (PTS), Vol. V, *Cullavagga X*, 2.1-3, p. 354-356. For the sake of clarity, I have substituted or supplemented some of the wording in I. B. Horner’s PTS translation of the *Cullavagga X* story of the foundation of the nuns’ order with words or phrases from her translation in Horner *Women Under Primitive Buddhism* 119-120.

interpretation, these discriminatory policies restrict women's authority and power, and consign them to a subordinate position within the *sangha*.

Simply replacing the words nuns/monks with the words blacks/whites, Tibetans/Chinese, Jews and Gypsies/Aryans, Koreans/Japanese, etc., in any version of this or any other like passage, makes it evident that even the most liberal reading of the rules would reinforce and perpetuate concepts of inherently existing, constant, independent *selves* and *other(s)* (*attā/ātman*)—which, according to the Buddhist *Dharma*, are the fundamental causes of suffering. Such views and practices would also lead to continued discriminatory thinking, discrimination, overt or hidden conflicts, and other afflictive mental states, and cause harm to both groups over time—just as like attitudes and policies promulgated and enforced by the ethnic groups and nationalities listed above (and countless others) have done. Dozens of psychological and social studies (discussed later in this article) have, in fact, shown that just such discrimination, even in very mild forms, generally results in exactly these sorts of negative effects.

The Eight *Garudhammas* and other unequal gender-based Buddhist rules and teachings that disparage women have long raised serious doubts among Buddhist scholars and practitioners: this is reflected in the many essays and books that have dealt with the subject. In part, this skepticism is due to contradictions between those passages and the many others that contain non-discriminatory and unequivocally positive attitudes toward women, and provisions to protect them from men who were reluctant to treat them as equals.³⁵ Evidence in the

³⁵ Rules in the *Vinaya*, for example, forbid monks from using nuns as domestic servants by having nuns provide them with food, or do washing, weaving, or sewing for them (*Vinaya, Suttavibhangha Pātiesaniya* 1, cited in Auer Falk 159, 165, and in Sujato *Bhikkhuni Vinaya Studies* 81). Tibetan Buddhist *samaya* vows require that practitioners respect women, and never disparage them. A passage in the *Sigālovāda Sutta*, DN 31, that describes how husbands and wives should behave towards one another, stipulates that

Tripitaka of serious conflicts in the early *Sangha* over the existence of the nuns' order, both during the Buddha's lifetime and following his *Parinibbāna*, has further fueled suspicions that the teachings that are critical of women, and rules restricting them, were the work of monks who interpolated them into the texts to control and limit the nuns' order.³⁶ Recent discoveries disproving details given in the *Tripitaka* about the timing of events in and contemporaneous to the Buddha's life, his *Parinibbāna*, and the First and Second Councils, have given still greater weight to arguments that some passages in the *sūtras* contain false or inaccurate information.³⁷

In recent decades, Buddhist scholars have made important new contributions to the debate on this issue. Fundamentalists have continued to argue that passages that suggest women are inferior to men, the Eight *Garudhammas*, and all other like teachings and rules, are entirely genuine and must be upheld. Other scholars have conjectured that the Buddha was forced by social mores to make statements or institute rules in keeping with the values of his time—and in so arguing have implied that at least some of the critical statements and special

husbands should treat their wives with respect, and that each party should treat the other well. As noted earlier, in the *Kimila [Kimbila] Suttas*, AN 5.201, AN 6.40, and AN 7.56, Śākyamuni warns his followers that the four assemblies' mutual respect for each other is essential for the survival of the *Dharma*.

³⁶ These conflicts are outlined in detail in Laohavanich 49-120; and Mettanando *After the Buddha*. Highly contradictory attitudes toward women in the early Buddhist canon (which suggest there were significant disagreements over women's status within the early *sangha*) are discussed in An 7-34; Anālayo "Theories on the Foundation of the Nuns' Order" 105-142; Anālayo "Women's Renunciation" 65-98; Auer Falk 155-165; and Sponberg 3-36.

³⁷ Anālayo "Women's Renunciation" 86-98; and Prebish "Cooking the Buddhist Books" 1-21. Prebish writes: "Because of this new date for the Buddha's demise, virtually everything we know about the earliest Indian Buddhism, and especially its sectarian movement, is once again called into question.... What is at least surprising, if not shocking, is that the combination of materials ... presented at the symposium has not sparked a renaissance of interesting new studies and theories regarding the life of the historical Buddha ... studies that would question all of our assumptions about the development of the early Indian Buddhist *sangha*" (2, 4).

rules for women are authentic.³⁸ But as Laohavanich, Faure, Schak, Tsomo, and others have pointed out, discriminatory rules and negative attitudes toward women contradict and negate fundamental Buddhist *Dharma*, including the Buddha's rejection of caste (which the Buddha viewed as irrelevant, as it has no effect on spiritual practice or potential).³⁹ It would be inconsistent to reject prejudice and discrimination based on caste and yet uphold and perpetuate that based on gender.

Jesus lived in a culture that appears to have been as sexist as that of the Buddha. Yet the Christian Bible contains no record of Jesus making negative statements about women, or creating any special rules for them. A number of passages in the Gospels depict him specifically praising female followers for their faith and virtues⁴⁰—just as many passages in the *Tripitaka* and later *sūtras* portray Śākyamuni and others extolling the accomplishment and qualities of female practitioners. The Buddha

³⁸ Gross *Buddhism After Patriarchy* 29-39; Kabilsingh "A Comparative Study" 24; Kabilsingh "The Role of Women" 225-226; Kabilsingh "Women in Buddhism"; Romberg 161-170; Shi 95-96; Tsomo "Gender Equity and Human Rights" 285; and Wijayaratna 25, and 159-160.

³⁹ Faure 60; Laohavanich 49-120; Mettanando *After the Buddha*; Schak 153; and Tsomo "Gender Equity and Human Rights" 281-289. See footnote 27 for a list of passages where the Buddha indicates that caste is irrelevant to those on the spiritual path, as it has no effect on spiritual ability or potential.

⁴⁰ Jesus praises women in the following passages in the Gospels: Matthew 9:20-22, 15:22-28, and 26:6-13; Mark 5:25-34, 7:25-30, 12:42-44, and 14:3-9; and Luke 7:36-50, 8:43-48, 10:38-42, and 21:1-4. He also openly accepts women as his disciples, performs many miracles of healing for them (Matthew 8:14-15 and 9:24-25; Mark 1:30-31, 5:21-43, and 7:25-30; and Luke 8:43-56 and 13:10-13), and disregards Rabbinic laws and customs that limited women's contact with religious authorities—teaching women in public and in private, and allowing himself to touch and be touched by them (including those deemed to be sinful or polluted). It is noteworthy, too, that the Gospels depict Jesus's principal male disciples running away in fear when he is arrested and crucified (Matthew 26:56 and Mark 14:50), whereas a group of his female disciples follow him and remain nearby throughout the crucifixion (Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40-41; Luke 23:49; and John 19:25-27). After his resurrection, Jesus appears first to his female disciples (Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; and John 20:1-18). A number of noncanonical early Christian texts particularly emphasize the accomplishment and importance of Jesus's female disciples.

repudiated many customs and values of his time without concern for criticism. His decision to eliminate all social class distinctions in the Buddhist *sangha* was as controversial a move as treating both genders equally, and it must have alienated and angered many among the upper castes. How could he have responded differently to social pressures over giving equal rights, respect, and opportunities to women?

Many scholars have argued that some or all of these unequal rules and negative statements about women contradict teachings and rules found elsewhere in the *Tripitaka*.⁴¹ Several have pointed to what they have called the ambivalence, inconsistency, or *multivocality* of the *Tripitaka* and other Buddhist texts in their often irreconcilable attitudes toward women, and they have often implied that the texts were likely written by a number of authors who differed strongly in their views of women and other matters.⁴²

The Canonical Accounts of Śākyamuni Buddha's Methods for Investigating Spiritual Teachings and Practices

Fortunately, the early Buddhist canon contains numerous accounts of the Buddha's methods for investigating and assessing the validity of spiritual teachings and practices. Much of the *Tripitaka* and later *sūtras* are devoted to detailed analyses of Right and Wrong View, and the right and wrong way to think, speak, behave, practice, and teach, and to

⁴¹ An 7-34; Anālayo "Theories on the Foundation of the Nuns' Order" 105-142; Anālayo "Women's Renunciation" 65-98; Chung 29-105; Faure 59-60; Kabilsingh "Women in Buddhism"; Kurihara 66-77; Kusama 5-12; Laohavanich 49-120; Mettanando *After the Buddha*; Schak 152-153; Sponberg 3-36; Sujato *White Bones*; and Tsomo "The Bhiksuni Issue" 218.

⁴² An 7-34; Anālayo "Theories on the Foundation of the Nuns' Order" 105-142; Anālayo "Women's Renunciation" 65-98; Auer Falk 155-165; Gross *Buddhism After Patriarchy* 29-54; Kabilsingh "Women in Buddhism"; Kurihara 66-77; Laohavanich 49-120; Mettanando *After the Buddha*; Schak 152-153; Sponberg 3-36; Sujato "A Painful Ambiguity" C1-C15; and Sujato *White Bones*.

stories in which the Buddha and his disciples resolve questions, problems, and misunderstandings relating to the *Dharma*. The Buddha also repeatedly makes clear that his teachings are often misremembered, misrepresented, or misunderstood: this is one of the chief reasons why one mustn't accept spiritual teachings without investigating them. Such passages convey directly and implicitly that false or distorted *dharma*, misguided or inappropriate teachers, and Wrong Views are among the most common problems Buddhists face. In several discourses, Śākyamuni warns that false and inaccurate teachings are among the conditions that will lead to the *Dharma's* decline and demise.⁴³ He also gives explicit directives for evaluating spiritual teachers and teachings.

This is the case in the narrative of the *Mahāpadesā* in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (DN 16, Part 4.8-11 and AN 4.180), the account of the Buddha's last days, where one would expect to find those teachings that the Buddha—or those who redacted the early Buddhist canon—considered most important, and thought essential for the survival of the *Dharma*. In that passage, Śākyamuni instructs that even when the source of teachings, rules, or practices is a monastic who claims to have heard the *dhammas* “from the Lord Buddha's own lips,” or directly from an elder, elders, or a community with elders and distinguished teachers, who are “learned, bearers of the tradition, who know the *Dhamma*, the discipline, the code of rules,” the practitioner still must not outright accept or reject their claims. She or he should “carefully note and compare [the claims] with the discourses and review [them] in light of the discipline.” The Buddha concludes: “If [the *dhammas*], on such comparison and review, are found not to conform to the discourses or the discipline, the conclusion must be: ‘Assuredly, this is not the word of

⁴³ See footnote 5 for a partial list of passages in the *Tripitaka* where the Buddha discusses false, misunderstood, and inaccurate *dharma*; factors leading to the decline and extinction of the *Dharma*; the qualities of true and false teachers; and right and wrong ways to practice and teach the *Dharma*.

the Buddha, it has been wrongly understood by this monk—or by that community, or by those elders, or that elder’—and [the teachings or practices] are to be rejected” (DN 16, Part IV).⁴⁴

Here, Śākyamuni stresses the likelihood that one will encounter false *dharma*, even from the most reputable and respected teachers. He also encourages any practitioner who may be fearful of questioning spiritual authorities, to feel confident that—regardless of the teacher’s credentials—the student is to rely on his or her own investigations and analysis and terms set forth by the Buddha in deciding whether or not to accept and follow teachings and practices.

The problem of false *dharma* is again raised in the Raft Simile in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, MN 22, and in similar terms, in the sixth chapter (“Rare is the True Faith”) of *The Diamond Sūtra*, one of the most important Mahāyāna texts.⁴⁵ In the latter account, the Buddha notably implies that false teachings arise as a result of belief in inherently existing, independent selves and others, and also as a result of the nihilist view that the *self/other(s)/living* beings do not exist in any manner. In both passages, the Buddha’s conclusion is that false teachings “must be relinquished.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Walshe, trans. *Digha Nikāya* 16, Part IV 255-256. Because attitudes toward females in the *Tripitaka* are highly contradictory, conformity to the discourses and *Vinaya* is an obviously problematic criterion to use in the present case.

⁴⁵ The *Alagaddūpama Sutta* passage reads: “I have taught the *Dhamma* compared to a raft, for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of holding onto. Understanding the *Dhamma* as taught compared to a raft, you should let go even of *dhammas*, to say nothing of non-*dhammas* [(false *dhammas*/mis-teachings)]” (MN 22: 10-12, trans. Thanissaro, *Access to Insight*). *The Diamond Sūtra* passage is very similar: “My teaching of the good law is to be likened unto a raft. The Buddha-teaching [法 *Dharma*] must be relinquished; how much more so mis-teaching [非法 the not-*Dharma*]!” (Price, trans. *The Diamond Sūtra* 22-23).

⁴⁶ Significantly, in neither the above-mentioned passages, nor any of the many other passages on false or distorted *Dharma* or on how to evaluate teachings and teachers, does Śākyamuni single out women as being responsible for problems with teachings (or otherwise), or for the decline or disappearance of the True *Dharma*. However, he often

In a well-known call to question in the *Jñānasāra-Samuccaya*, also found in the *Tattva-saṃgraha* by Śāntarakṣita, Śākyamuni insists that his followers question and test teachings they have heard directly from the Buddha himself. He also asks that they rely on their own judgment and investigations and use the scientific method⁴⁷ in making their determinations:

Brethren, when I speak to you, don't accept it blindly because you love and respect me. But examine it and put it to the test, as a goldsmith examines gold, by cutting, heating, and hammering it to know whether it is genuine gold or counterfeit. If you see it is reasonable, only then accept it and follow it. (*Jñānasāra-Samuccaya*)⁴⁸

A passage in the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya* contains a similar message: the Buddha advises that one should not accept teachings blindly out of respect for one's teacher, but should "affirm . . . only that which you yourselves have recognized, seen, and grasped" (*Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya Sutta*, (PTS) MN I, 256/MN 38).⁴⁹ In *Caṅkī Sutta*, MN 95, the Buddha conveys that practitioners should rely on "what they learn from . . . personal experience" rather than from the "unbroken

mentions other causes—most often misunderstandings and incorrect attitudes, behavior, practices, and teachings.

⁴⁷ In the scientific method or *systematic empiricism*, a hypothesis (in this case, a *dharma*) is constructed. Experiments or observations are then conducted to test that hypothesis. The hypothesis must be modified based on the results obtained, or else discarded entirely if the facts reveal it to be false. The Dalai Lama has often stated that the discourse cited here, and several other passages in Buddhist texts, encourage the use of the scientific method in assessing the validity of Buddhist teachings, rules, and practices. (See Piburn *A Policy of Kindness* 60-65; and The Dalai Lama *The Universe in a Single Atom* 28-31).

⁴⁸ *Jñānasāra-Samuccaya* is commonly attributed to the Second Āryadeva though some scholars contend that he was not the author.

⁴⁹ The passage reads: [The Buddha] "... [W]ould you say: 'We honor our Master and through respect for him, we respect what he teaches?'" [The disciples answer:] 'Nay, Lord.' [The Buddha:] 'That which you affirm, O disciples, is it not, only that which you yourselves have recognized, seen, and grasped?' 'Yes, Lord'" (*Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya Sutta*, (PTS) MN I 256/MN 38).

tradition of their lineage.”⁵⁰ Elsewhere in the *Tripitaka*, he reiterates the importance of self-reliance.⁵¹

In what is likely the best known passage on this theme—a dialogue between Śākyamuni and a group of villagers in the *Kālāma Sutta*—the Buddha advises his audience they are right to question all spiritual authorities, including himself. He goes on to warn them not to rely on the traditional bases of religious doctrine (scriptures, teachers, religious authorities, and tradition) when making a decision as to whether or not to accept a teaching. Again Śākyamuni establishes methods to be used in the process—one should make one’s determination based on what one “know[s] for [one]sel[f]” of *dharmas*’ qualities and of what “*dharmas* . . . lead to.” Taken in the context of the passage as a whole, and given the Buddha’s instructions in the discourses cited above, the terms he outlines imply that one should rely on personal knowledge and experience, and whatever else one “knows for oneself” to be reliable, concrete evidence concerning *dharmas*’ qualities and effects. The passage reads:

Yes, Kālāmas, it is proper that you have doubt, that you have perplexity, for doubt has arisen in a matter that is

⁵⁰ The passage reads: “Oh Bhāradvāja, it is as if three blind men lined up. The first cannot see, the one in the middle cannot see, and the last one cannot see. The lineage of brahmins is like that line of blind men, the first could not see, the ones in the middle could not see, and the last cannot see. Oh Bhāradvāja, regarding this situation, does the faith of the brahmins have any root?” Bhāradvāja responded, ‘Venerable Gautama, in this case the brahmins’ faith is in what they learn from the unbroken tradition of their lineage, not from personal experience’” (*Caṅkī Sutta*, (PTS) MN II p.170/MN 95).

⁵¹ The importance of self-reliance is communicated in statements like: “Your own self is your own mainstay, for who else could your mainstay be? With you yourself well-trained you obtain the mainstay hard to obtain” (*Attavagga*, Dh 12.160, trans. Thanissaro, Access to Insight). “[B]e islands unto yourselves, refuges unto yourselves, seeking no external refuge; with the *Dhamma* as your island, the *Dhamma* as your refuge, seeking no other refuge”; and “For that which I have proclaimed and made known as the *Dhamma* and the Discipline, that shall be your Teacher when I am gone” (*Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* DN 16, Part 2.33; and Part 6.1, trans. Vajira and Story, Access to Insight).

doubtful. Now, look you, Kālāmas, do not be led by reports, or tradition, or hearsay. Be not led by the authority of religious texts, nor by mere logic or inference, nor by considering appearances, nor by the delight in speculative opinions, nor by the seeming possibilities, nor by the idea: ‘this is our teacher.’ But . . . when you know for yourselves that, ‘These *dhammas* are unskillful and unwholesome (*akusala*); these *dhammas* are blameworthy; these *dhammas* are criticized by the wise; these *dhammas*, when adopted and carried out, lead to harm and suffering’ then you should abandon them . . . When you know for yourselves that, ‘These *dhammas* are skillful and wholesome; these *dhammas* are blameless; these *dhammas* are praised by the wise; these *dhammas*, when adopted and carried out, lead to welfare and to happiness,’ then you should accept and follow them (*Kālāma Sutta*, (PTS), AN I 188/AN 3.65).⁵²

The *Satthusasāna Sutta* (To Upāli), AN 7.80,⁵³ *Gotamī Sutta*, AN 8.53,⁵⁴ and the *Ambalaṭṭhikā Rāhulovāda Sutta*, MN 61 (discussed below) each depict Śākyamuni repeating this same broad assertion: one should

⁵² I have emended latter half of the PTS translation, cited in Walpola 2-3, for the sake of clarity, drawing from several different translations, particularly Thanissaro’s translation in *Access to Insight*.

⁵³ “Upali, the *dhammas* of which you may know, ‘These *dhammas* do not lead to utter disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, nor to Unbinding’: You may definitely hold, ‘This is not the *Dhamma*, this is not the *Vinaya*, this is not the Teacher’s instruction’” (*Satthūsāsana Sutta*, AN 7.80/AN 7.83, trans. Thanissaro, *Access to Insight*). (The passage repeats, describing the opposite conditions and conclusion.)

⁵⁴ “*Gotamī*, the *dhammas* of which you may know, ‘These *dhammas* lead to passion, not to dispassion; to being fettered, not to being unfettered; to accumulating, not to shedding; to self-aggrandizement, not to modesty; to discontent, not to contentment; to entanglement, not to seclusion; to laziness, not to aroused persistence; to being burdensome, not to being unburdensome’: You may categorically hold, ‘This is not the *Dhamma*, this is not the *Vinaya*, this is not the Teacher’s instruction’” (*Gotamī Sutta*, AN 8.53, trans. Thanissaro, *Access to Insight*). (The passage repeats, describing the opposite conditions and conclusion.)

base one's decision as to whether or not a *dharma* is the *True Dharma* or should be followed, on what one knows of what "*dharmas* lead to." If the teaching or practice leads to any of the spiritually counterproductive or otherwise harmful states enumerated in the passage (or fails to lead to any of the beneficial, positive states or outcomes outlined), one can "definitely hold, 'This is not the *Dhamma*, this is not the *Vinaya*, this is not the Teacher's instruction.'"

The importance of all these calls to investigate spiritual teachings is underlined by their recurrence in the *Tripitaka*, and by the fact that the *suttas* depict the Buddha repeating such instructions in his final days. Unquestioning faith and acceptance of spiritual teachings and teachers is not only dangerous; it is discouraged in the strongest terms. To carefully investigate, and only then accept or reject teachers, rules, and teachings is not a sin, nor is it heresy or blasphemy. It is, in fact, a Buddhist's *duty*—the prerequisite, necessary step that Buddhists should take before accepting *dharmas* as authentic.

Together, these guidelines for the analytical study of spiritual teachings establish that if one determines, after thorough investigation, that a teaching or practice is unreasonable or contradicts essential Buddhist *Dharma*, or if it leads to spiritually disadvantageous, or otherwise harmful states or results, that *dharma* should be determined to be false and should be abandoned. If, after careful investigation, one comes to the opposite conclusions, it should be determined to be genuine and should be accepted and followed.

It can be concluded that each of the sets of guidelines for the investigation of spiritual teachings attributed to the Buddha in the *Tripitaka* is, itself, the *True Dharma* and should be "accepted and followed," as each accords with the fundamental methodologies and criteria set forth in the other guidelines ascribed to the Buddha, and

with several of the most essential Buddhist *Dharma* principles.⁵⁵ Each set of guidelines is also reasonable, and is designed to help the practitioner to avoid spiritually counterproductive or otherwise negative or harmful states or results, and to bring about spiritually beneficial, positive, non-harmful ones.

The methods and criteria that the Buddha establishes in any one of these passages can also be considered sufficient grounds for determining the authenticity of a teaching or rule, or whether or not it should be “accepted and followed.” If this were not the case, the Buddha would have had to say so, or reiterate all the criteria necessary for making such an assessment on each occasion. (His willingness to repeat long, detailed lists of instructions for the sake of clarity and precision is a well-known characteristic of the Buddhist *sūtras*.)

Two of the discourses in which the Buddha presents criteria for evaluating teachings and all verbal, mental, and bodily actions—the *Kālāma Sutta* and the *Ambalaṭṭhikā Rāhulovāda Sutta*—are of particular significance in the present case, as both passages focus specifically on harm. In the *Ambalaṭṭhikā Rāhulovāda Sutta*, the Buddha states that bodily, verbal, or mental actions that lead to harm or suffering should be abandoned—they are “are unfit for you to do”:

Whenever you want to do a mental action, you should reflect on it: “This mental action I want to do—would it lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Would it be an unskillful mental action, with painful consequences, painful results?” If, on reflection, you know that it would lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of oth-

⁵⁵ Buddhist doctrines that accord with the standards for assessing *dharma*s attributed to the Buddha in the *Tripitaka*, include: dependent origination, the law of cause and effect, non-harm, moral discipline, mindfulness, and analytical meditation. All are essential aspects of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path.

ers, or to both; it would be an unskillful mental action with painful consequences, painful results, then any mental action of that sort is absolutely unfit for you to do. But if on reflection you know that it would not cause affliction . . . it would be a skillful mental action with pleasant consequences, pleasant results, then any mental action of that sort is fit for you to do” (MN 61).⁵⁶ (The Buddha repeats these same instructions for past, present, and future bodily, verbal, and mental actions).

In the portion of the *Kālāma Sutta* that immediately follows the more famous excerpt cited earlier, Śākyamuni illustrates the use of the method he has just outlined for assessing *dharmas*—focusing on the question of whether or not they lead to harm—as in *Ambalaṭṭhikā Rāhulovāda Sutta*. He asks his audience if they do not think that the *dharmas* greed, aversion, and delusion lead to harm, then briefly summarizes some rather general practical evidence, based on common knowledge that they do. On the basis of that evidence—what he and his audience know of the *dharmas*’ general harmful effects—he leads his audience to the conclusion that they are therefore unskillful, unwholesome, blameworthy, criticized by the wise, and should be abandoned.⁵⁷ In other words, when one

⁵⁶ MN 61, trans. Thanissaro, Access to Insight.

⁵⁷ The passage, which immediately follows the more famous excerpt of the *Kālāma Sutta* cited earlier, reads: “What do you think, Kālāmas? When greed arises in a person, does it arise for welfare or for harm?” ‘For harm, lord.’ ‘And this greedy person, overcome by greed, his mind possessed by greed, kills living beings, takes what is not given, goes after another person’s wife, tells lies, and induces others to do likewise, all of which is for long-term harm and suffering.’ ‘Yes, lord.’ ‘Now, what do you think, Kālāmas? When aversion arises in a person, does it arise for welfare or for harm?’ ‘For harm, lord.’ ‘And this aversive person, overcome by aversion, his mind possessed by aversion, kills living beings, takes what is not given, goes after another person’s wife, tells lies, and induces others to do likewise, all of which is for long-term harm and suffering.’ ‘Yes, lord.’ ‘Now, what do you think, Kālāmas? When delusion arises in a person, does it arise for welfare or for harm?’ ‘For harm, lord.’ ‘And this deluded person, overcome by delusion, his mind possessed by delusion, kills living beings, takes what is not given, goes after another person’s wife, tells lies, and induces others to do likewise, all of which is for long-term harm and suffering.’ ‘Yes, lord.’ ‘So what do you think, Kālāmas: Are these quali-

knows for oneself, based on concrete, practical evidence, that *dharma*s lead to harm, that determination is grounds for establishing the other criteria the Buddha enumerates in the passage, and abandoning the teaching or practice.

Such a reading of the *Kālāma Sutta* is again reasonable because it would be dangerous (and so unskillful, unwholesome, blameworthy, worthy of criticism, and unwise) to practice something one knew to result in harm, just because one could not establish one or all of the other criteria given. For the same reason, it is also reasonable to conclude that other like passages, such as the *Ambalaṭṭhikā Rāhulovāda Sutta*, *Satthusasāna Sutta*, and *Gotamī Sutta*, should also be understood to mean that the *dharma* in question should be determined to be false and/or abandoned when one knows, based on well-substantiated, solid evidence, that the teaching or method has any of the negative qualities, or leads to any of the detrimental conditions or states that the Buddha outlines. The passages are, in fact, worded in a manner that such a reading is valid and is the most sensible explanation of the passage.

The above interpretation of the *Kālāma Sutta*, *Sāḷha Sutta*, AN 3.66 (which contains identical instructions), and the *Ambalaṭṭhikā Rāhulovāda Sutta*, also accords with the most fundamental Buddhist *Dharma: non-*

ties skillful or unskillful? ‘Unskillful, lord.’ ‘Blameworthy or blameless?’ ‘Blameworthy, lord.’ ‘Criticized by the wise or praised by the wise?’ ‘Criticized by the wise, lord.’ ‘When adopted and carried out, do they lead to harm and to suffering, or not?’ ‘When adopted and carried out, they lead to harm and to suffering. That is how it appears to us.’ ‘So, as I said, Kālāmas: ‘Don’t go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, ‘This contemplative is our teacher.’ When you know for yourselves that, ‘These qualities are unskillful; these qualities are blameworthy; these qualities are criticized by the wise; these qualities, when adopted and carried out, lead to harm and to suffering’—then you should abandon them.’ Thus was it said. And in reference to this was it said” (*Kālāma Sutta*, AN 3.65, trans. Thanissaro, Access to Insight). Identical instructions are found in the *Sāḷha Sutta*, AN 3.66, in a dialogue between the monk Nandaka and *Sāḷha*, the son of one of the Buddha’s disciples.

harm/harmlessness is essential to the Buddhist path to enlightenment,⁵⁸ and many passages in the *Tripitāka* and later *sūtras* make clear that teachings, practices, and other mental, verbal, and bodily actions or states that lead to harm, are blameworthy, unskillful, unwholesome, criticized by the wise, or should be abandoned.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *Non-harm/harmlessness* (the importance of not harming oneself or others) is central to the Buddhist *Dharma*, as set forth in the Four Noble Truths, which teach the way leading to the cessation of suffering—a phenomenon that the Buddha repeatedly implies results from Wrong Views, ignorance/self-clinging, anger, desire, and other harmful mental, verbal, and bodily actions and states. *Non-harm/the (Right) Resolve not to harm oneself or others* is also an integral part of the Noble Eightfold Path, the conduct and cultivation of body, speech, and mind necessary for enlightenment. The most direct reference to the importance of non-harm/harmlessness to the Noble Eightfold Path is the Buddha's explanation of Right Resolve in *Magga-Vibhaṅga Sutta*, SN 45.8; *Mahācattārisaka Sutta*, MN 117; *Saccavibhaṅga Sutta*, MN 141; and *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, DN 22: “And what is right resolve? Being resolved on renunciation, on freedom from ill-will, on harmlessness: This is called right resolve” (trans. Thanissaro, Access to Insight). In *Udāyī Sutta*, AN 5.159, the Buddha advises (with regard to Right Speech): “The *Dhamma* should be taught with the thought, ‘I will speak without hurting myself or others’” (trans. Thanissaro, Access to Insight). A similar statement appears in *Vangisa V, Subhasita*, Thag 21.1227-1228. Elsewhere, the Buddha frequently implies or directly states that non-harm/harmlessness is an essential aspect of the Middle Path. (See, for example, *Dvedhāvitakka Sutta*, MN 19; *Abhayarājakumāra Sutta*, MN 58; *Ambalaṭṭhikārahulovāda Sutta*, MN 61; *Samaṇamaṇḍikā Sutta*, MN 78; *Sāḷha Sutta*, AN 3.66; *Vācā Sutta*, AN 5.198; *Dhammaññū Sutta*, AN 7.64/AN 7.68; *Cunda Kammaraputta Sutta*, AN 10.176; *Saṅgāma Sutta*, SN 3.15; *Loka Sutta*, SN 3.23; *Dasa Sikkhāpada*, The First Precept, Khp 2; *Mettā Sutta*, Khp 9; *Pupphavagga*, Dh 4.49; *Daṇḍavagga*, Dh 10.129-134; *Dhammatṭhavagga*, Dh 19.270; and *Kevaddha [Kevaṭṭa] Sutta*, DN 11.)

⁵⁹ In several passages in the *Tripitāka*, non-harm/harmlessness is part of the Buddha's description of the qualities of a wise or noble person, and of someone of great discernment or integrity. (See, for example, *Pupphavagga*, Dh 4.49; *Dhammatṭhavagga*, Dh 19.270; *Vassakāra Sutta*, AN 4.35; and *Caṅkī Sutta*, MN 95). In the *Kusalā Sutta*, AN 2.19 (On Skillfulness/Wholesomeness); in the *Ambalaṭṭhikārahulovāda Sutta*; and in the *Samaṇamaṇḍikā Sutta*, MN 78, the Buddha implies that harmlessness is an essential aspect of skillfulness/wholesomeness, and that unskillfulness/unwholesomeness leads to “harm and suffering.” The Buddha also states in the *Ambalaṭṭhikārahulovāda Sutta* that any thoughts, words, or actions that lead to harm and suffering should be abandoned. And in the *Kusalā Sutta*, as in the *Kālāma Sutta*, he exhorts practitioners to abandon that which is unskillful/unwholesome: “If this abandoning of what is unskillful/unwholesome were conducive to harm and pain, I would not say to you, ‘Abandon what is unskillful.’ But because this abandoning of what is unskillful is conducive to benefit and pleasure, I say to you, ‘Abandon what is unskillful....’ If this development of what is skillful were conducive to harm and pain, I would not say to you, ‘Develop what is skillful.’ But because this development of what is skillful is conducive to benefit and

Scientific and Social Evidence that Discrimination and Negative Expectations and Concepts of Self and Others Lead to Harm

Twentieth and Twenty-first century psychological and social studies on the effects of discrimination, expectations, and concepts of self and others, have produced a large body of evidence that now makes it possible to scientifically assess the effects of gender-based Buddhist rules and negative teachings about women. The use of these findings in evaluating the effects of Buddhist *dharma* is acceptable for a few reasons. As noted, according to the *Tripitaka*, Śākyamuni repeatedly insists that practitioners investigate spiritual teachings and practices, and he makes clear that in so doing, they can rely on what they know to be reliable, concrete evidence available in their own cultural context—including that established via the scientific method. It is also an implicit assumption of the Buddhist *Dharma* that its teachings and methodologies may be used by people in different times and circumstances.

In the Buddha's analysis in the *Kālāma Sutta* of the *dharmas* greed, anger, and ignorance, he and his audience assess those mental/verbal/bodily states based on what they know of their general practical effects. They do not have to put each *dharma* into practice themselves, or witness others practicing them in order to evaluate them: it would be dangerous to insist that practitioners personally try out, or ask others to try, practices that are similar or identical to those they know to lead to spiritually unfavorable or otherwise harmful states or results. The passage implies that practitioners can infer from what they know of the general practical effects of *dharmas*, or of *dharmas* that are

pleasure, I say to you, 'Develop what is skillful'" (AN 2.19, trans. Thanissaro, Access to Insight). In *Samañamañdikā Sutta*, MN 78, the Buddha states: "And what are skillful/wholesome resolves? Being resolved on renunciation, on non-ill will, on harmlessness. These are called skillful resolves" (trans. Thanissaro, Access to Insight).

similar to those in question, in determining whether or not teachings and practices should be followed or abandoned.⁶⁰

The large number of psychological and social studies conducted to date on the effects of views and practices that are the equivalent of Buddhist gender-based rules and negative teachings about women (of which there are over a thousand), and the overall concurrence of their findings, make this evidence reliable, germane, and sufficient to enable Buddhist practitioners to “know” what such “*dharmas* . . . lead to.”

Research on the Effects of Discrimination, Suggestions, and Self/Other Concepts

As early as 1952 there was sufficient research on the psychological and social effects of negative stereotypes and discrimination that testimony on those findings provided the key evidence in the famous U.S. Supreme Court case on school segregation, *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka*. That evidence was so convincing, the court ruled unanimously:

Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law, for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the Negro group. A

⁶⁰ In his book, *The Universe in a Single Atom*, the Dalai Lama affirms that Buddhist philosophy accepts both the use of empirical evidence and the use of inference in the process of assessing *dharmas*. He writes: “[I]f a proposal pertains to facts about the world that are observable ... then it is by empirical experience that the proposal may be affirmed or rejected. Thus, Buddhism puts the empirical method of direct observation first. If, by contrast, the proposal relates to generalizations that are induced from our experience of the world ... then it is by reason, primarily in the form of inference, that the proposal may be accepted or rejected” (28). The Dalai Lama discusses this Buddhist system of logic for the analytical investigation of teachings and phenomena in some detail in Piburn, *A Policy of Kindness* 60-65—also pointing out that it is a system in which “sameness of nature” and “effects” (from which the existence of causes can be inferred) are legitimate grounds for inference (62-63).

sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to [retard] the educational and mental development of Negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racial[ly] integrated school system (Brown v. Board of Ed., Opinion of the Court, Warren).

A survey of American psychologists cited in the court ruling reported:

82 percent of the psychologists answering believed that even enforced practices of segregation under 'equal conditions' harm[ed] the majority group [(whites)]; 90.4 percent that they harm[ed] the minority group [(blacks)]. Only 3.3 percent of the 272 psychologists interviewed believed that it [did] not detrimentally affect the majority, and 2.2 percent believed that it [did] not have unfavorable consequences for the segregated group (Deutsch and Chein 259-287).

Policies of discrimination against blacks in the southern United States were the equivalent of the Eight *Garudhammas* and other discriminatory rules and practices alleged to have been instituted by the Buddha—and still in place today in most Buddhist orders in Asia. (The policies forced blacks to sit at the back of buses, set up separate schools and other facilities for blacks and whites, barred blacks from upper level positions of authority in society, prevented them from voting, and generally limited their civil rights, authority, activities, and status, based on their alleged inferiority and negative influence. Similar policies have been enacted in recent centuries by European Colonial powers, the Japanese, Germans, Chinese, and Africaners, among many others.) An expert report in the Brown case, prepared for the Court by the foremost authorities of the day in the fields of sociology, anthropology,

psychology, and psychiatry, offers further insights into the nature of the harm generally done to those who are subject to such discrimination:

[C]hildren [who are subject to discrimination] learn the inferior status to which they are assigned—as they observe the fact that they are almost always [distinguished] . . . from others who are treated with more respect by the society as a whole—they often react with feelings of inferiority and a sense of personal humiliation. Many of them become confused about their own personal worth. On the one hand, like all other human beings they require a sense of personal dignity; on the other hand. . . they [do not] find their own dignity as human beings respected by others. Under these conditions, the [stigmatized] child is thrown into a conflict with regard to his feelings about himself and his group. He wonders whether his group and he himself are worthy of no more respect than they receive. This conflict and confusion lead to self-hatred and rejection of his own group. . . .

Some children . . . may react by overt aggressions and hostility directed toward their own group or members of the dominant group. . . . [T]he larger society . . . often interprets such aggressive and antisocial behavior as justification for continuing prejudice. . . . [Other] children are likely to react to their frustrations and conflicts by withdrawal and submissive behavior. Or, they may react with compensatory and rigid conformity to the prevailing . . . values and standards, and an aggressive determination to succeed in these terms in spite of the handicap of their status. . . .

[Stigmatized] children of all social and economic classes often react with a generally defeatist attitude and a lowering of personal ambitions. This, for example, is reflected in a lowering of pupil morale and a depression of the educational aspiration level among minority group children in segregated schools. In producing such effects, segregated schools impair the ability of the child to profit from the educational opportunities provided him.

Many [stigmatized] children of all classes also tend to be hypersensitive and anxious about their relations with the larger society. They tend to see hostility and rejection even in those areas where these might not actually exist. . . . [W]hile the range of individual differences among members of a rejected . . . group is as wide as among other peoples, the evidence suggests that all of these children are unnecessarily encumbered in some ways by [discrimination] and its concomitants.⁶¹

Hundreds of studies carried out since that 1952 Supreme Court ruling have confirmed its conclusions that discrimination and negative expectations, suggestions, and concepts of self and others are harmful to those who discriminate as well as to those who are subject to discrimination.

One of the most moving and best known of these is an informal study, designed by elementary school teacher, Jane Elliot, in 1968 as an exercise to help her students question and understand the effects of prejudice, and so avoid discriminating against others.⁶² In that study,

⁶¹ *Brown v. Board of Ed.*, Appendix to Appellants' Briefs; and Clark, Chein, and Cook 495-501. See also Grossack 71-74—a 1956 report on the psychological effects of segregation on buses, which reaches similar conclusions.

⁶² Elliot did not report her findings in scholarly journals. However, two award-winning documentary films, *The Eye of the Storm* and *A Class Divided* were made of her studies. See

Elliot tells her third-grade students, “Blue-eyed people are better than brown-eyed people . . . more civilized, cleaner, and smarter.” She points out undesirable behavior in the “brown-eyed people” and implies it is evidence of their selfishness, jealousy, lower intelligence and abilities, bad temper, negative influence on others, and other unflattering traits. (The accusations are remarkably similar to Śākyamuni’s alleged criticisms that women are ignorant, easily angered, selfish, envious, filthy, and less capable than men, and that their influence on others is destructive, like that of Māra, or of diseases that infest and quickly destroy rice and sugarcane fields.)

Elliot then institutes a series of rules—the “inferior” brown-eyed people are subject to special constraints, and accorded more limited rights than the “superior” blue-eyed people. At once, the classroom is transformed. The blue-eyed children begin to view the “brown eyes” as inferior, and see the “brown eyes” behavior as evidence of their supposed shortcomings. A few avoid the brown-eyed children, mock them, or treat them abusively. Though some students appear reluctant to accept the new biases and rules, only one dares to voice his opinions. The “brown eyes” are hurt, angry, and dejected. A few misbehave, or fight with other children. The “brown eyes” also have difficulty concentrating, and perform worse than usual on a timed vocabulary test, whereas the “blue eyes” perform better than usual.

The next day the teacher announces that she misled the class the previous day—it is in fact brown-eyed people who are superior—and immediately the rules, views, and dynamics switch. On the second day it is the “superior brown eyes” who test better than usual, and the “inferior blue eyes” who perform more poorly than usual, and who experience the same adverse effects felt by the “brown eyes” the

Peters *A Class Divided*; and Peters *The Eye of the Storm*. The former can be viewed online at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/divided/etc/view.html>.

previous day. Over the decades following her initial experiment, Elliot carried out several versions of the study on children and adults in a number of different cultures, confirming her initial findings.

Although the stereotypes used in Elliot's studies were new to the subjects, most of the children quickly accepted the ideas and rules introduced by their teacher, an established figure of authority. The act of introducing the notion of one group's inferiority, and establishing privileges for the "superior" people and special rules for the "inferior" people, had immediate harmful effects, not only on the "inferior" children's test performance, but on the "bodies, speech and minds" of the entire class. As Elliot expressed it, "I watched what had been marvelous, cooperative, wonderful, thoughtful children turn into nasty, vicious, discriminating, little third-graders in a space of fifteen minutes" (Peters *A Class Divided*). When later asked why they had accepted Elliot's judgments and rules, most students responded that it was because, after Elliot had informed them of each group's alleged traits, the members of that group did indeed seem to behave and perform as their teacher had described them.

Over a hundred further studies on human suggestibility have found that both adults and children can be influenced by suggestions; when suggestions are repeatedly reinforced, subjects will often accept and embrace new information, including negative stereotypes, and in some circumstances, even false or misleading accounts about facts, people, or events they themselves have witnessed, experienced, or known.⁶³ Young children have been found to be particularly vulnerable.⁶⁴

⁶³ The following is a partial list of such studies on human suggestibility: Belli 72-85; Brainerd and Mojardin 1361-1377; Christiaansen, Sweeney, and Ochalek 59-65; Gudjons-son 195-199; Lindsay "Eyewitness Suggestibility" 86-89; Lindsay "Misleading Suggestions" 1077-1083; Loftus "Leading Questions and the Eyewitness Report" 550-572; Loftus "Shifting Human Color Memory" 696-699; Loftus *Eyewitness Testimony*; Loftus "Memory Distortion and False Memory Creation" 281-295; Loftus "Imagining the Past" 584-587; Loftus "Planting Misinformation in the Human Mind" 361-366; Loftus "Searching for the Neurobiology of the Misinformation Effect" 1-2; Loftus and Greene 323-334; Loftus

Dozens of related studies have confirmed that stereotypes, expectations, and concepts of self and others (such as negative Buddhist views of women) are learned,⁶⁵ and that social contexts and authority figures play important roles in shaping adults' and children's developing beliefs about themselves and others⁶⁶—including how they perceive their own

and Hoffman 100-104; Loftus and Loftus 409-420; Loftus, Miller, and Burns 19-31; Shaw, Garven, and Wood 503-523; Thompson, Clarke-Stewart, and Lepore 405-426; Wright, Varley, and Belton 13-21; and Zaragoza and Mitchell 294-300.

⁶⁴ The following is a partial list of studies that have found young children to be particularly vulnerable to suggestions: Brainerd, Reyna, and Brandse 359-364; Bruck and Ceci "The Suggestibility of Young Children" 75-79; Bruck and Ceci "The Suggestibility of Children's Memory" 419-439; Bruck, Ceci, Francoeur, and Barr 193-208; Ceci and Bruck "The Suggestibility of the Child Witness" 403-439; Ceci, Crotteau Huffman, Smith, and Loftus 388-407; Ceci, Ross, and Toglia 38-49; Cohen and Harnick 201-210; Garven, Wood, Malpass, and Shaw 347-359; Kassin 300-302; Leichtman and Ceci 568-578; McBrien and Dagenbach 509-528; Pezdek and Hodge 887-895; and Warren and Marsil 127-147.

⁶⁵ See, for example: Baldwin 461-484; Bar-Tal 341-370; Bigler, Jones, and Lobliner 530-543; Bigler and Liben "Cognitive Mechanisms in Children's Gender Stereotyping" 1351-1363; Bigler and Liben "A Developmental Intergroup Theory of Social Stereotypes and Prejudice" 39-89; Bigler, Spears Brown, and Markell 1151-1162; Clark and Clark "Segregation as a Factor in the Racial Identification of Negro Children" 161-163; Clark and Clark "Racial Identification and Preference in Negro Children" 169-178; Killen and McKown 616-622; Leichtman and Ceci 568-578; Martin and Halverson "A Schematic Processing Model of Sex-Typing and Stereotyping in Children" 1119-1134; Martin and Halverson "The Effects of Sex-Typing Schemas on Young Children's Memory" 563-574; McKown and Weinstein "The Development and Consequences of Stereotype Consciousness" 498-515; Morland 120-127; Murphy and Dweck 283-296; Patterson and Bigler 847-860; Perry and Bussey 1699-1712; Picariello, Greenberg, and Pillemer 1453-1460; Radke, Sutherland and Rosenberg 154-171; Radke and Trager 3-33; Radke, Trager, and Davis 327-447; Radke-Yarrow, Trager, and Miller 13-53; Rudman, Ashmore, and Gary 856-868; Slaby and Frey 849-856; and Stevenson and Stewart 399-409.

⁶⁶ See, for example: Baldwin 461-484; Bar-Tal 341-370; Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, and Twenge 589-604; Bem "Self-Perception: An Alternative Interpretation" 183-200; Bem "Self-Perception Theory" 1-62; Bigler, Jones, and Lobliner 530-543; Bigler and Liben "A Developmental Intergroup Theory of Social Stereotypes and Prejudice" 39-89; Bigler, Spears Brown, and Markell 1151-1162; Black-Gutman and Hickson 448-456; Bong and Skaalvik 1-40; Brewer 429-444; Clark and Clark "The Development of the Consciousness of a Self and the Emergence of Racial Identification" 591-599; Clark and Clark, "Segregation as a Factor in the Racial Identification of Negro Children" 161-163; Clark and Clark "Skin Color as a Factor in the Racial Identification of Negro Children" 159-169; Clark and Clark "Emotional Factors in Racial Identification and Preference" 341-350; Cordua, McGraw, and Drabman 590-593; Duckitt 1182-1193; Festinger 117-140; Goodman 624-630; Killen and McKown 616-622; Krishna 1104-1107; Leichtman and Ceci 568-578; Lipsitz-Bem "Gender Schema Theory and Its Implications for Child Development" 598-616; Mahalingam 300-319; Mahalingam, Haritatos, and Jackson 598-609; Mahalingam

and others' qualities, abilities, and human potential.⁶⁷ A substantial body of additional research has established that, once learned, discriminatory treatment, expectations, and concepts of self and others are internalized. Unless or until they are questioned, rejected, or revised, they become information-processing mechanisms that are unconsciously used to shape and organize memory, often distorting information as it is processed.⁶⁸

and Rodriguez 157-174; Martin and Halverson "A Schematic Processing Model of Sex-Typing and Stereotyping in Children" 1119-1134; McKown and Weinstein "The Development and Consequences of Stereotype Consciousness" 498-515; Morland 120-127; Murphy and Dweck 283-296; Nesdale 92-110; Nesdale and Flesser 506-517; Ogbu "Origins of Human Competence" 413-429; Ogbu and Simons "Voluntary and Involuntary Minorities" 155-188; Patterson and Bigler 847-860; Pettigrew 65-85; Radke, Trager, and Davis 327-447; Slaby and Frey 849-856; Snyder and Stukas 273-303; Stangor, Sechrist, and Jost; Stevenson and Stewart 399-409; Stipek and Daniels 352-356; Tajfel "Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations" 1-39; and Weinstein, Marshall, Sharp, and Botkin 1079-1093.

⁶⁷ The following is a partial list of the many studies and reports that have found evidence that humans' interests and aspirations, and perceptions of their own and others' qualities, abilities, and human potential, are greatly formed through experience with, and interpretation of their environment: Aronson and Steele 436-456; Baldwin 461-484; Bong and Skaalvik 1-40; Brookover, Thomas, and Paterson 271-278; Eccles and Wigfield 109-132; Entwisle and Hayduk 34-50; Entwisle and Webster *Raising Children's Expectations for Their Own Performance*; Entwisle and Webster "Status Factors in Expectation Raising" 115-126; Harter "Causes, Correlates, and the Functional Role of Global Self Worth" 67-97; Harter *The Construction of the Self*; Huston Stein, Rimland Pohly, and Mueller 195-207; Montemayor 152-156; Murphy and Dweck 283-296; Nieva and Gutek 267-276; Ogbu "Origins of Human Competence" 413-429; Ogbu "Minority Status and Schooling" 163-190; Ogbu and Simons "Cultural Models of School Achievement"; Phillips and Zimmerman 67-97; Pintrich and Blumenfeld 646-657; Snyder and Stukas 273-303; Steele "A Threat in the Air" 613-629; Steele "Thin Ice" 44-54; Stipek and Daniels 352-356; Tiedemann 191-207; Weinstein, Marshall, Sharp, and Botkin 1079-1093; and Wilder 13-23.

⁶⁸ See, for example: Baldwin 461-484; Bem "Self-Perception: An Alternative Interpretation" 183-200; Bigler and Liben "The Role of Attitudes and Interventions in Gender-Schematic Processing" 1440-1452; Bigler and Liben "A Developmental Intergroup Theory of Social Stereotypes and Prejudice" 39-89; Bigler, Spears Brown, and Markell 1151-1162; D. T. Campbell 350-355; Cann and Newbern 1085-1090; Clark and Clark "Skin Color as a Factor in the Racial Identification of Negro School Children" 161-163; Cordua, McGraw, and Drabman 590-593; Darley and Fazio 867-881; Darley and Gross 20-33; Eiser, Stafford, and Fazio "Expectancy Confirmation in Attitude Learning" 1023-1032; Eiser, Stafford, and Fazio "Prejudiced Learning" 399-413; Galinsky and Ku 594-604; Krieger "The Content of Our Categories" 1161-1248; Krishna 1104-1107; Leichtman and Ceci 568-578; Lipsitz-Bem "Gender Schema Theory and Its Implications for Child Development" 598-616; Lipsitz-Bem "Gender Schema Theory: A Cognitive Account of Sex Typing" 354-

A series of studies conducted by Yale University psychologist Stanley Milgram in the 1960s, and a 1971 study designed by Stanford researcher Philip Zimbardo, commonly referred to as The Stanford Prison Experiment, are among the best-known examples of these studies on human vulnerability to suggestions and self/other concepts. The experiments reveal how profoundly adults can be influenced and even transformed by ideas and instructions transmitted to them by authority figures and by the roles that they themselves and others play. The studies examined subjects' willingness to obey officials who asked them to perform roles or act in ways that went against their personal sense of morality. They found that most subjects were willing to accept the instructions and roles given to them, even when asked to engage in actions they knew would harm others.⁶⁹

364; Martin and Halverson "A Schematic Processing Model of Sex-Typing and Stereotyping in Children" 1119-1134; Martin and Halverson "The Effects of Sex-typing Schemas on Young Children's Memory" 563-574; Nieva and Gutek 267-276; Radke, Sutherland, and Rosenberg 154-171; Radke and Trager 3-33; Radke, Trager, and Davis 327-447; Signorella and Liben 393-405; Snyder 183-212; Snyder and Stukas 273-303; Stabler, Johnson, Berke, and Baker 1233-1239; Tajfel "Cognitive Aspects of Prejudice" 79-97; Tajfel and Wilkes 101-114; Tiedemann 191-207; and Wilder 13-23.

⁶⁹ Milgram "Behavioral Study of Obedience" 371-378; Milgram *Obedience to Authority*; Zimbardo *The Lucifer Effect*; and Zimbardo *The Power and Pathology of Imprisonment*. Some of the Milgram studies were made into documentary films—among them his well-known film "Obedience" (currently available online at: <http://www.mediasales.psu.edu/>). In the best known of Milgram's studies, subjects who were assigned the role of "teacher" were told to give electric shocks to a "learner" they were led to believe was a fellow subject in the study, to punish him or her for incorrectly answering a question. Subjects were told the experiment was a study of memory and learning, and that the voltage increased for each wrong answer. (In fact, the "learner" was an actor who did not receive a shock at all.) 65 percent of the subjects continued to follow the authority figure's instructions up to and including the experiment's final 450-volt shock. Only one subject refused to administer shocks before the 300-volt level. Subsequent variations of the studies by Milgram and other researchers have found that, regardless of time or place, 61-66 percent of subjects are prepared to give potentially fatal voltages, simply because an authority instructs them to do so. In the Stanford Prison Project, twenty-four summer school students at Stanford University were chosen to play prison guards or prisoners in a mock prison in a study that was to last two weeks. The study was terminated after just six days because many of the "guards" and "prisoners" became abusive, angry, or severely depressed—unable to separate themselves from the parts they had been assigned to play. Critics of the study

A noteworthy study on children in this same field is a 1995 Harvard experiment involving 176 preschoolers of various ethnic and economic backgrounds. It found that a high percentage of preschoolers' accounts of events relating to a stranger's visit to the school could be altered by stereotypes presented by authority figures before his visit, and by erroneous suggestions they made about the visit after the event.⁷⁰ This study and dozens of related experiments have confirmed that young children are especially vulnerable to suggestions and stereotypes, which may not only color their perceptions. In some circumstances they may even alter memories of actual events, or encourage children to fabricate new false memories about events they have experienced (Leichtman and Ceci 568-578).

Studies carried out since the 1930s by Mamie and Kenneth Clark and several other researchers have examined the strong effects that repeated exposure to negative stereotypes and discrimination generally have on the self-image of those who are subject to them. In the Clark

have argued that because subjects knew the nature of the experiment before agreeing to participate, the study attracted troubled individuals who indulged in abnormal behavior. However, similar subsequent studies without such flaws have made comparable findings—though the behavior of participants has been less extreme.

⁷⁰ Leichtman and Ceci 568-578. Children in the control group, who did not hear any statements about the stranger before or after his visit, all reported accurately on the visit. Nearly all resisted making false claims, even when repeatedly asked whether he had done anything to damage a book or teddy bear. The children who had heard stereotypes that the man was clumsy and stumbling before his visit did not make any false claims during their free narratives about the visit. But when repeatedly questioned as to whether or not he had ripped a book or dirtied a teddy bear, 37 percent claimed that he did at least one of these things. 21 percent of the youngest children and 14 percent of the older children who had heard erroneous suggestions after the visit that the stranger had damaged teddy bears or books, made false claims that he had done so in their unprompted, free narratives about the visit. Most remarkable, 46 percent of the youngest children, and 30 percent of the older children who had heard stereotypes about the man before his visit, and had been subject to false suggestions about his actions after the visit, made unprompted, false statements in their free narratives that he had either ripped a book or soiled a teddy bear. In response to follow-up questions, 72 percent of the youngest children indicated (falsely) that he did one or the other of these deeds. Several of those children also fabricated new details to embellish their claims.

studies in the 1930s and 1940s, for example, black children (who were then frequently exposed to discrimination and negative stereotypes) were asked to choose between white and brown dolls that were identical except in color. A majority of those children indicated a preference for the white dolls, which they indicated looked “good” and “nice,” in contrast with the brown dolls, which a majority indicated looked “bad”—yet which most of the children also perceived looked like themselves.⁷¹

Researchers have documented similar statements about women in Buddhist majority and former Buddhist majority countries in Asia in recent years. As noted earlier, David Schak, Linda Learman, and I found highly derogatory views of women to be commonplace in present-day Taiwan, even among women themselves. A 2010-2011 survey of Buddhists in South Korea, conducted by Professor Eun-su Cho, revealed that negative attitudes toward women also remain prevalent among Buddhists in that country.⁷² Toshie Kurihara, a Japanese scholar, wrote in 2005 that Japanese women today “tend to be despised and oppressed” (Kurihara 66), an account elucidated by Nancy Barnes who observed in 1994 that women in Japan “have internalized all the negative [Buddhist and Shinto] views of women as polluted, inferior, greedy, jealous, [and] attached to worldly things” (Barnes 149). Thai scholars Juree Vichit-Vadakan and Ouyporn Khuankaew have written of belittling attitudes toward women in Thailand in recent decades—views that both scholars attribute in good part to Buddhist belief systems and practices. In a 2002 article, Khuankaew notes:

⁷¹ *Briggs et al. v. Elliott et al.*, Testimony of Kenneth Clark; Clark and Clark “The Development of the Consciousness of a Self and the Emergence of Racial Identification” 591-599; Clark and Clark “Segregation as a Factor in the Racial Identification of Negro Children” 161-163; Clark and Clark “Skin Color as a Factor in the Racial Identification of Negro Children” 159-169; and Clark and Clark “Emotional Factors in Racial Identification and Preference” 341-350.

⁷² Based on correspondence with Professor Eun-su Cho regarding her 2010-2011 research on contemporary Korean Buddhist attitudes toward women.

This structural karma of women's oppression is caused by several factors such as poverty and war, but the main root causes are values and belief systems . . . and [mental] pictures of women and men. These are the images perpetuated through family, school, media, and religious teachings. In all places where we asked workshop participants how women and men are viewed and valued in their society, the followings were the answers: "Women are weak, thus cannot be independent. They need parents or husbands to protect and guide their lives. Women are supposed to be good listeners and good followers of their parents or husbands. Once married, women are the property of men, and have to be loyal to their husbands. Widowed women are viewed as worthless. Women's roles are as mother and housewife. . . ." [In contrast, the following statements show how] men are viewed and valued in these societies: "Men are protectors, ones who sacrifice, leaders of the household and community, the bread winners, ones who are trustworthy, ones who are strong and brave, confident and wise" (22-26).

Vichit-Vadakan writes of the effect of Buddhist beliefs on Thai women's status and self-image:

[T]he impact of religion on women's status and position is profound, yet subtle . . . Thai Buddhism has thrived and continues to thrive on account of women. . . . But the place of women in Buddhism is secondary to men's. . . . A woman, even a female child, must not touch a monk. Women are viewed as polluted because of their menstrual blood. Young girls and old women are not excepted, possibly because of the former's potential to become pollut-

ed, and the latter's history of having been polluted. Fundamentalist Buddhists would rationalize that those who are born female have worse karma than men from the outset. It is the belief that a woman must suffer and learn to bear her suffering bravely so that she may be born a man in the next life. Many do not seem to question this belief, treating it as a universal truth. Excluded from direct contact with monks, who are symbols of sacredness, women are also barred from becoming nuns, and therefore cannot gain merit as such. But women can gain extra merit from sons who are ordained. . . . The point to stress here is that women's position and status in society are low relative to men's. Women are subservient to men, second in rank . . . They choose to submit to men, or take the back seat (521-522).

Low assessments of women's worth have also recently been documented in Bhutan, Tibet, India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. A 2011 government survey in Bhutan, for example, found that roughly 70 percent of women believed they deserved beating if they argued with their partners, refused sex, neglected children, or burned dinner (*USA Today*). Tenzin Palmo, a prominent Western nun and founder of a nunnery in the Tibetan Kagyu tradition, spoke in the late 1990s of widespread deprecatory attitudes toward women in the Tibetan community:

Among Tibetan women their main prayer is to be reborn in the male body. They are looked down upon from all sides. . . . I once visited a nunnery where the nuns had just come back from hearing a high lama teach. He had told them women were impure and had an inferior body. They were so depressed. Their self-image was so low. How can

you build a genuine spiritual practice when you're being told from all sides that you're worthless? (Mackenzie 54-55).

Her observations are echoed by scholar Kim Gutschow who in 2004 remarked upon such beliefs among Tibetans in India and Tibet:

[A]lmost every woman I interviewed admitted that she prayed to be reborn as a man (137). . . . The female body is [seen as] more than impure; it is a calamity and a punishment. The Tibetan terms for woman, “lower birth” (*skye dman*) or “black one” (*nag mo*), make explicit her lower or stained status (212). . . . Tibetan refugees who were interviewed about [a common] myth explained that women most resemble the ogress—impetuous, violent, witchlike—while men have inherited the cleverness of the monkey [W]omen are said to be plagued by jealousy, greed, anger, and desire, while men are more driven by ambition, logic, and power. In the local vernacular, men have “big hearts” (*snying chen mo*), while women have “small hearts” (*snying chung*). Women are said to be fearful, bashful, and wicked, while men are brave, brash, and good (215).

Nineteenth and early Twentieth century writings of rural girls and women in South China, written in a script used exclusively by females, now commonly referred to as *nüshu*, also document what was then a universal belief among *nüshu* writers: because they had not “practiced well in previous lives,” they had the “bad fate” to have “mistaken births” as “worthless/useless females” (Liu “From Being to Becoming: *Nüshu*” 422-439).⁷³ Common Chinese folk sayings, such as, “It’s

⁷³ The findings on *nüshu* reported here are also based on: Chiang; Liu “Women Who De-Silence Themselves”; Silber; and based on my own fieldwork and collection of *nüshu* songs, letters, and stories.

better to have a dog than a daughter,” “Women are not real human beings,” and “A talentless woman is virtuous; an intelligent woman is tragic,” likewise convey the degrading views of women that have been promulgated in that culture (Yung 103-112; Zhang 601-609).⁷⁴ Such views have been inculcated in good part by prevailing Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian attitudes toward women—as the *nüshu* writers’ repeated assertions that *they were born “useless/worthless women” because they had not “practiced well in previous lives,”* reveal.

Evidence of Self-Fulfilling Prophecies/Expectations Effects

Hundreds of further psychological and social studies have established that discrimination, expectations, and concepts of self and others have a profound impact on human development and social reality—not only because they influence how we perceive ourselves and others, and how we behave, but because they can also affect human achievement—apparently in every domain.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ An analysis of over five hundred Chinese proverbs by Hong Zhang found that the vast majority portrayed women negatively.

⁷⁵ The following list contains only a few dozen of the hundreds of studies and reports that have found that self/other concepts, stereotypes, suggestions, expectations, ideologies, and discrimination can affect human performance and achievement. It is intended to give the reader an idea of the breadth and focus of such studies. Further details of the various types of studies are discussed later in this article, and additional references are given: Aronson and Steele 436-456; Baumeister and Dwall; Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, and Twenge 589-604; Baumeister, Twenge, and Nuss 817-827; Bong and Skaalvik 1-40; Braun 185-213; Brookover, Thomas, and Paterson 271-278; Dtrevis and Croizet; Eccles and Wigfield 109-132; Entwisle and Hayduk 34-50; Entwisle and Webster *Raising Children’s Expectations for Their Own Performance*; Entwisle and Webster “Status Factors in Expectation Raising” 115-126; Harris and Rosenthal 363-386; Harrison, Stevens, Monty, and Coakley 341-357; Huguet and Régner 545-560; Huston Stein, Rimland Pohly, and Mueller 195-207; Kierein and Gold 913-928; Jamieson, Lydon, Stewart, and Zanna 461-466; Jussim, Robustelli, and Cain; Krishna 1104-1107; Markus, Cross, and Wurf 205-225; Marsh and Seeshing Yeung 705-738; Merton “The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy” 193-210; Montemayor 152-156; Murphy and Dweck 283-296; Phillips 2000-2016; Raudenbush 85-97; D. Reynolds 475-483; Rosenthal “Interpersonal Expectancy Effects: A 30-Year Perspective” 176-179; Rosenthal and Fode “The Problem of Experimenter Out-

Analyses of the findings of the well over four hundred studies on the effects of authority figures' expectations on students, workers, and test subjects (known as the Pygmalion Effect, Teacher Expectations Effect [TEE], or Self-Fulfilling Prophecies [SFP]), have found that, in a given classroom or study, such preconceptions make on average a 5 to 10 percent difference in subjects' achievement.⁷⁶ In many individuals the effects of authority figures' biases are slight, and some experience no measurable effects at all. But in some subjects (typically 5 to 10 percent of a given group), the impact of authority figures' expectations can be considerably larger—particularly when an individual or group is at a vulnerable or suggestible stage of life, is subject to low expectations elsewhere (from friends, family, other authority figures, or from society at large), or is subject to discriminatory treatment or prejudice over a period of many years.⁷⁷ These effects are likely to be especially robust

come-Bias"; Rosenthal and Fode "The Effect of Experimenter Bias on the Performance of the Albino Rat" 183-273; Rosenthal and Lawson 61-72; Rosenthal and Rubin 377-415; Rubie-Davies, Hattie, and Hamilton 429-444; Snyder and Stukas 273-303; and Walton and Cohen 456-467.

⁷⁶ Brophy 631-661; Brophy and Good; Jussim; Jussim and Eccles 74-108; Jussim and Harber 140; Jussim, Robustelli, and Cain; and Raudenbush 85-97. Some researchers believe that in naturalistic settings the average TEE is closer to 5 percent.

⁷⁷ A number of variables have been found to play a role in determining the magnitude of a teacher's influence on students. For example, the following types of students have been found to be particularly vulnerable to teachers' expectations: Students who are very young, or negotiating transitions, such as at the start of kindergarten or middle school (Raudenbush 85-97); students in classrooms with large numbers of students and few resources (Finn 387-410); students from stigmatized ethnic minority groups or low socio-economic backgrounds (Coleman et al.; Jussim, Eccles, and Madon 281-388; Jussim and Harber 131-155; and McKown and Weinstein "Modeling the Role of Child Ethnicity and Gender" 159-184); students who have performed poorly in school in the past (Madon, Jussim, and Eccles 791-809; and A. E. Smith et al. 530-561); and students with low or unclear self-concepts (Brattesani, Weinstein, and Marshall 236-247; and Jussim, Eccles, and Madon 281-388). Also, the following types of teachers are more likely to produce expectation effects: teachers who believe that intelligence or ability is fixed (Trouilloud et al. 75-86); teachers who tend to treat low and high achievers differently (Brattesani, Weinstein, and Marshall 236-247; and Kuklinski and Weinstein 1554-1578); teachers who are susceptible to biasing information about their students (Babad, Inbar, and Rosenthal 459-474); and teachers with a greater desire to control, influence, or dominate their students (Cooper and Hazelrigg 937-949; and Hazelrigg, Cooper, and Strathman 569-579). Learning environments that provide less autonomy, self-control, and

when coupled with discrimination that influences the opportunities, status, activities, or rights of a stigmatized individual or group.

The potential power of such “self-fulfilling prophecies” can be seen in the findings of several recent reports on prisoner rehabilitation in Europe. The studies found that prisons in Scandinavia, which generally expected better behavior and more positive outcomes for prisoners than most prisons elsewhere, had recidivism rates of 20 to 35 percent—less than half the 70 to 75 percent European average. Scandinavian countries also have some of the lowest rates of incarceration in Europe. (The Nordic prisons treat inmates—including those charged with murder and other violent offenses—with more optimism and respect, giving them more freedom, responsibility, and training than conventional penal institutions.)⁷⁸ The reoffending rate at an experimental Norwegian prison that had some of the highest expectations for prisoner behavior and rehabilitation was just sixteen percent—the lowest rate of any prison in Europe. (That prison—which also housed murderers and other violent offenders—did not lock up prisoners, and gave them pleasant living conditions, and jobs with considerable responsibilities) (Hernu).

Expectations/bias effects have also been shown to occur between researchers and the subjects of their experiments. Studies in the 1960s conducted by Rosenthal, Fode, and Lawson, which measured the effects of experimenters’ expectations on laboratory rats, found that rats trained by experimenters who’d been told their rats had been bred to be exceptionally bright, performed better overall than rats trained by

independence have also been found to increase those effects (Trouilloud et al. 75-86). For discussions of studies that have found unusually robust TEE effects, see also Rosenthal and Jacobson “Teachers’ Expectancies: Determinants of Pupils’ IQ Gains” 115-118; and Rosenthal and Jacobson *Pygmalion in the Classroom*.

⁷⁸ The above facts and statistics on Nordic and European prisons are based on the following sources: Hernu; Damon; Fouche; Hoge; and Pratt and Eriksson 7-23. The recidivism rates quoted are based on rates of prisoners’ reconviction within three years of release.

experimenters who had been told their rats had been bred to be exceptionally dull. Rosenthal and his colleagues also noted, “experimenters with [what they believed to be] “bright” rats were more satisfied [with their participation] in the experiment and tended to be more enthusiastic, encouraging, pleasant, and interested in their rats’ performances.”⁷⁹

The well-known phenomenon in medical practice and testing, commonly referred to as the “placebo effect”—an improvement in the condition of a patient which occurs in response to the patient’s (and often doctors’/researchers’) expectations and beliefs, but which cannot be considered to be due to the specific treatment used—likewise provides empirical evidence of the potential power of self-fulfilling prophecy effects.

Psychological Research on Stereotypes Threat

The over three hundred psychological studies conducted to date worldwide on the effects of stereotypes on subjects’ test performance (commonly referred to as *stereotype threat*) offer the most consistent findings among the various fields of study described herein.⁸⁰ These studies have shown that subliminally reminding subjects of a negative stereotype associated with a group with which they identify before they take a difficult test in the field threatened by the stereotype will usually

⁷⁹ Rosenthal and Fode “The Effect of Experimenter Bias on the Performance of the Albino Rat” 183-273; and Rosenthal and Lawson 61-72.

⁸⁰ Their consistency seems likely to be due in good part to the fact that most of the studies assess the long-term effects of “real-life” stereotypes on adult subjects, rather than the effects of new stereotypes, expectations, self-concepts, etc., “artificially” introduced by researchers for the purpose of a given study.

lower test scores: eliminating an implicit threat before subjects take such a test will usually raise them.⁸¹

As one researcher notes, “The pattern of effects is remarkable for its consistency: when a negative stereotype is [subliminally] elicited during an ability-diagnostic task, participants who are members of the threatened group usually under-perform relative to their known ability” (Biek 1-2). Across different age groups and cultures, this research has shown that “the mere thought of a negative stereotype about one’s group can impair performance.”⁸² The opposite thought can improve it.⁸³

⁸¹ The abstracts of over half of the over 300 studies on stereotype threat published to date in the English Language can be found at www.reducingstereotypethreat.org. For summaries of the findings of studies on stereotype threat, see also Aronson and Steele 436-456; and Steele “A Threat in the Air” 613-629. My own examination of approximately half of the abstracts and/or full reports of the studies published to date, determined that over 80 percent of the studies reported that the expected stereotype threat effects did indeed occur. In the approximately 20 percent of cases where such effects did not manifest, it often appeared that either another pre-existing stereotype had influenced the stereotype threatened group, or created a threat to the control group which caused subjects in the control group to perform as poorly as students in the stereotype threat group—or that *stereotype reactance* had caused subjects to increase their efforts. (Among the findings of the studies published to date on the effects of stereotype threat on test performance, there is one common “exception to the rule”—a set of circumstances under which pre-existing negative stereotypes often don’t have an adverse impact on the test scores of groups subject to stereotype threat. That is, when subjects are *directly* told or reminded of a stereotype that the group to which they belong is inferior to another group, they often make an extra effort to succeed, and can sometimes overcome the negative effects of stereotype threat—a phenomenon referred to as *stereotype reactance*. For studies on stereotype reactance see Kray, Thompson, and Galinsky 942-958; and Kray, Reb, Galinsky, and Thompson 399-411.)

⁸² “The Effects of Stereotype Threat on Women’s Mathematical Performance.” The examples that follow illustrate the general nature of most of the over three hundred studies on stereotype threat conducted to date—the vast majority of which have confirmed that pre-existing stereotypes can affect human performance: In a golf exercise, white athletes performed worse than black athletes when told that their scores would demonstrate their “natural athletic ability” (stereotypically, a black trait). On the same test, blacks performed worse than whites when they were told that it tested their “sports strategic intelligence” (according to stereotype, a white trait) (Stone et al. 1213-1227). In a study in which women and men with equivalent math backgrounds and abilities, who had previously tested equally well on similar math tests, were given a difficult math test, women performed more poorly than the men when they were told before taking the test that men generally performed better on the test (stereotype threat condition). When, prior to taking the test, a second group of women were told

Like the effects of suggestions, discrimination, and expectations, stereotype threat effects have been found to occur even when the subjects are privileged, non-stigmatized members of society who do not see themselves as inferior.⁸⁴

Psychological and social studies on a variety of ethnic and age groups have also found that people who are subject to negative stereotypes, expectations, or discriminatory treatment may suffer from a range of conditions due to their harmful effects on body and mind—especially when the discrimination is extreme or new.⁸⁵ Those conditions

that women and men performed equally well on the test, that group of female subjects performed equally well. That latter group of women also performed better than a group of women who were given the test after being subliminally reminded of their gender in a standard demographic inquiry that included the test-taker's gender, which they filled out before taking the test—demonstrating that the implicit threat of a stereotype that existed in the culture had likely caused the underperformance (Spencer, Steele, and Quinn 4-28).

⁸³ Groups reminded prior to taking a difficult test, of stereotypes that they are superior to another group(s) in a given realm, have generally been found to score better than control groups in tests relating to that realm. This is referred to as “stereotype lift.” See Walton and Cohen 456-467.

⁸⁴ The following studies illustrate the nature of the findings of studies on non-stigmatized groups: In a study conducted at a university in France, female and male students were asked to perform three decision-making tasks using lexical, valence, and affective processing. The researchers reported: “Half the participants were told that, in general, men perform more poorly than women at affective processing tasks [(stereotype threat condition)]. No differences between the two groups were observed for the lexical and valence tasks. By contrast, for the affective task, [stereotype] threatened men made significantly more errors than did the participants in the other three conditions (Leyens et al. 1189-1199). In a similar test, expert male golfers who were told “women ... tend to perform better than men on our putting task” [(a new stereotype)] before taking a golf test, performed more poorly than another group of men who were told, “This research [is] investigating individual differences in golf putting performance” [(control group)] before taking the same test (Beilock et al. 1059-1071). See also Aronson, Lustina, Good, Keough, Steele, and Brown 29-46.

⁸⁵ See, for example: Aronson and Inzlicht 829-836; Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, and Twenge 589-604; Beilock et al. 1059-1071; Blascovich et al. 225-229; Brondolo et al. 150-173; Croizet et al. “Stereotype Threat Undermines Intellectual Performance” 721-732; Derks, Inzlicht, and Kang 163-181; Finch, Kolody, and Vega 295-313; Fischer and Shaw 395-407; Grossack 71-74; Harrell, Hall, and Taliaferro 243-248; Harter *The Construction of the Self* 195-227; Hess et al. P3-P11; Jackson et al. 132-147; Kessler, Mickelson, and Williams 208-230; Koenig and Eagly 489-496; Krieger “Racial and Gender Discrimination:

include: depression; elevated blood pressure; difficulty concentrating, processing information, or making decisions; and a variety of other chronic health problems. Everyone is subject to stereotypes on a daily basis—and vulnerable to stereotype threat. In the case of those deemed inferior in a given realm, stereotypes create long-term, even lifelong explicit and subliminal messages that can undermine performance, health, confidence, interests, aspirations, and success in the domain(s) concerned.

Studies that have explored strategies for counteracting and even eliminating the effects of stereotype threat are also noteworthy for the fact that they substantiate Buddhist doctrine and mind training practices. Some strategies have involved removing the stereotype,⁸⁶ or increasing subjects' awareness and understanding of stereotype threat and its effects (Johns, Schmader, and Martens 175-179). (In Buddhist terms, these strategies work by increasing subjects' understanding of the distorted and illusory nature of self-concepts and their effects, and reducing or eliminating subjects' identification with them). Other strategies have entailed giving subjects special encouragement and support (Steele "A Threat in the Air" 623-627; and Steele "Thin Ice" 44-54), providing threatened individuals with means with which to effectively cope with negative self-concepts and emotions (Johns, Inzlicht, and Schmader 691-705), or reminding subjects of positive

Risks for High Blood Pressure?" 1273-1281; Marx and Stapel 687-698; Mays and Cochran 1869-1876; Noh et al. 193-207; Osborne 291-310; Pavalko, Mossakowski, and Hamilton 18-33; Quinn and Spencer 55-71; Richeson and Trawalter 336-352; Sanders Thompson, Noel, and Campbell 529-544; Schmader and Johns 440-452; Schmader, Johns, and Forbes 336-356; Schmeichel, Vohs, and Baumeister 33-46; Steele "Thin Ice" 44-54; Stone et al. 1213-1227; Williams, Neighbors, and Jackson 200-208; Wraga, Duncan, Jacobs, Helt, and Church 813-819; and Wraga, Helt, Jacobs, and Sullivan 12-19.

⁸⁶ Stereotype threat may be eliminated, for example, by informing subjects before testing that a negative stereotype about their group is untrue or does not affect scores on the test concerned. See Brown and Day 979-985; Croizet and Claire 588-594; Davies, Spenser, and Steele 276-287; Kray, Galinsky, and Thompson 386-409; and Spencer, Steele, and Quinn 4-28.

personal traits, alternate identities, or stereotypes about their peer group before testing (mind training/Tibetan deity yoga).⁸⁷ Still further strategies have included conveying that personal abilities and traits are not constant, permanent, inevitable, or innate, but are changeable and dependent upon effort and learning (“causes and conditions”).⁸⁸

Evidence from Social Research

Comparisons of how well one ethnic group performs in various cultures, under the influence of different expectations, stereotypes, and forms of discrimination, provide still further evidence that concepts of self and others are learned, and that they have a powerful impact on how well a group can do. Stigmatized minority groups tend to fulfill the expectations of the majority. For example, Koreans do well in American schools, where there is no unfavorable stereotype about their academic performance, but perform poorly in Japanese schools where Koreans are commonly perceived to be inferior.⁸⁹ Finnish children’s failure rate is high in Swedish schools, where they are frequently seen as less able than Swedish students. Yet when they immigrate to Australia, where no such

⁸⁷ G. L. Cohen et al. 1307-1310; Galinsky, Thompson, and Kray; Gresky et al.; Martens et al. 1-17; and Levy 1092-1107.

⁸⁸ Research shows that students’ concepts of intelligence affect academic achievement, and that when faced with stereotype threat, students who believe intelligence is changeable generally do better than students who believe it is fixed or innate. See Aronson, Fried, and Good 113-125; Aronson, Cohen, McColskey, Lewis, Mooney, and Montrosse; Dar-Nimrod and Heine 435; Diener and Dweck 451-462; Dweck and Leggett 256-273; Dweck and Sorich 232-251; E. S. Elliott and Dweck 5-12; Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht 645-662; Mangels et al. 75-86; Mueller and Dweck 33-52; Pintrich and Garcia 371-402; Reducing Stereotype Threat; and Utman 170-182.

⁸⁹ C. Lee and De Vos; Y. Lee 131-167; Ogbu “Understanding Cultural Diversity and Learning” 5-14+24; and Rohlen 182-222. The Burakumin (another ethnic minority in Japan whose members are commonly viewed as inferior) also perform more poorly in Japanese schools than the majority population (Ogbu “Understanding Cultural Diversity and Learning” 7; and Shimahara 327-353).

prejudice exists, they perform as well as Swedish immigrants (Kincheloe and Steinberg 15).

This phenomenon is found in industrial and non-industrial nations throughout the world. Minorities who are perceived as inferior and discriminated against generally perform more poorly at school, have higher dropout rates, and score an average of ten to fifteen points below non-stigmatized members of society on standardized intelligence tests. They also often avoid, or experience difficulty entering or succeeding in a number of rewarding fields of work and study, and suffer from other problems due to discriminatory treatment, a lack of interest or support, or low expectations, self-esteem, or motivation.⁹⁰

It is no accident that women's overall social, economic, and political standing remains relatively low in Buddhist majority and former Buddhist majority countries today when compared with that of women in countries with religious or unaffiliated majorities that hold more positive and egalitarian views of females. Studies of gender empowerment in countries throughout the world have shown that religious majorities that view females as inferior or secondary exert a negative influence on the broader culture's attitudes toward women, and adversely affect a range of empowerment measures. These may include women's rights, status, health, general welfare, career and other opportunities, and levels of education, income, political standing, and attainment. These studies and reports also show that religious and secular ideologies that support gender equality and favorable views of

⁹⁰ Gibson 431-454; Kincheloe, Steinberg, and Gresson; Ogbu *Minority Education and Caste*; Ogbu "Minority Education in Comparative Perspective" 45-57; Ogbu, "Minority Status and Schooling" 168-190; Ogbu "Understanding Cultural Diversity" 5-14+24; Ogbu and Simons "Voluntary and Involuntary Minorities" 155-188; Steele "A Current Theory on Why Blacks Score Lower Than Whites on the Scholastic Assessment Test" 11; Steele "A Threat in the Air" 623; and *Time Magazine* "Behavior: Race and I.Q." Other factors, such as socioeconomic status, the quality of local schools, parents' level of education, etc., must also play a part in lowering stigmatized minorities' performance and achievement. Some such factors are discussed in Jencks and Phillips 24-27.

women have positive effects.⁹¹ Due to doctrinal, cultural, economic, political, and other factors, there is considerable variability among countries whose majority religions discriminate against women, in the realms, and the degree to which women experience discrimination. The most consistent and ubiquitous feature of gender-based discrimination in Buddhist majority and former Buddhist majority countries today is the prevalence of negative attitudes toward women, which mimic those found in Buddhist scriptures. A number of studies and statistics have also established an overall pattern of relatively low female empowerment:

⁹¹ See, for example: Chenoy 516-518; Chhachhi 567-578; D. Cho 450-462; Derne 203-227; Dollar and Gatti 12, and 20; The East-West Center; Fackler; Gandhi 127-129; Gill 441-462; Glass and Jacobs 555-579; Gutschow; Hanai; Hélie 2454-2456; International Organization of Parliaments (IPU); W. J. Jacob 149-169; J. A. Jacobs 153-185; Jayaweera 455-466; Kenworthy and Malami 235-268; Keysar and Kosmin 49-62; Khuankaew 22-26; E. King and Hill; U. King 35-49; Klunklin and Greenwood 46-61; Knodel 63, and 80; Kosmin, Keysar, and Lerer 523-532; Kumar 81-92; Lehrer “The Effects of Religion on the Labor Supply of Married Women” 281-301; Lehrer “Religion as a Determinant of Educational Attainment” 358-379; Lewin; Mahalingam, Haritatos, and Jackson 598-609; Makhlof Obermeyer 46-50; Miller 1087; National Institute for Educational Development, Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), Vietnam; OECD *The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)* 2009; Paxton, Hughes, and Green 904, 914, and 916; Paxton and Kunovich 91-92; Raksasataya 86-90; A. Reynolds 547-572; Roberts and Maldonado A1; Sarutta; Sen 1297-1298; “Sex Ratio”; Sheel 4097-4101; Sherkat and Darnell 23-35; Siaroff 197-215; Tomalin 385-397; United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) *The State of the World’s Children 2007—Women and Children: The Double Dividend of Gender Equality*; United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) *Women in Local Government in Asia and the Pacific*; UNESCAP Country Reports on the State of Women in Urban Local Government; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) *The Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2003/4—Gender and Education for All*; United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) *Asia—Rural Women and Food Security*; *USA Today/Vishal Arora Religion News Service*; Vella 191-211; Vichit-Vadakan 515-524; “Women’s Rights in Burma”; World Bank *Global Monitoring Report 2007: Millenium Development Goals—Confronting the Challenges of Gender Equality and Fragile States*; and World Economic Forum *Global Gender Gap Reports, 2007-2011*. The majority religions of countries reported in this paper are based on the C.I.A. *World Fact Book—Religions*, 2010. Included here among Buddhist majority countries are those countries that until recently had Buddhist majorities, such as Korea, China, and Vietnam (which currently have unaffiliated majorities)—as Buddhism has played an important role in determining present-day attitudes toward females in those countries.

According to the latest (2009) U.N. Human Development Program (UNHDP) *Gender Empowerment Measure Report*, only one Buddhist majority or former Buddhist majority country, Singapore, was among the top fifty member countries ranked (that is, among those countries with the best overall gender equality). The World Economic Forum's 2008-2011 *Global Gender Gap Reports* (based on levels of attainment in the domains of education, political empowerment, health and survival, and economic participation and opportunities), included just two Buddhist majority countries among the fifty top-ranked countries—Sri Lanka and Mongolia—whose Twentieth century political, educational, and social systems were strongly influenced by the British and Soviets, respectively (Ames 19-42; S. R. Khan 211; and Rossabi). A number of recent reports indicate, however, that serious problems of gender inequality persist in both countries.⁹² Even the most prosperous Buddhist/former Buddhist majority countries today, Japan and Korea, have been found to have large gender gaps—disparities that are considerably larger than those of similarly affluent countries with religious or unaffiliated majorities that foster more equitable and positive attitudes toward women.⁹³

⁹² See Rossabi; De Soysa; United Nations Development Program (UNDP) *Human Development Report 2009—Gender Empowerment Measure and Its Components*; UNESCAP *State of Women in Urban Local Government—Sri Lanka*; U.S. Department of State *2010 Human Rights Report: Sri Lanka*; “Women’s Situation in Sri Lanka”; World Organization Against Torture (OMCT).

⁹³ According to the latest (2009) UN Gender Empowerment Measure Report, Japan, the most prosperous Buddhist majority country at present, has one of the worst records of gender equality among the world’s wealthiest countries. It placed 57th among the 109 nations surveyed by the UN—just below Kyrgyzstan, and well below most other developed nations, and below dozens of poorer, developing ones (UNDP *Human Development Report 2009—Gender Empowerment Measure and Its Components*). Japan, Singapore, and Korea, which are among the most prosperous countries in the world, were listed 98th, 57th, and 107th, respectively, out of the 135 countries surveyed in the 2011 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report; and 94th, 56th, and 104th; 75th, 85th and 115th; and 98th, 84th and 108th, respectively in 2010, 2009, and 2008—again, well below dozens of poorer developing nations in the rankings. A 2007 survey of the thirty OECD member states found Korea to have the widest earnings gap between men and women—38 percent—more than double the OECD average. Japan ranked second to last in the report, with a gap of 33 percent—just above Korea in the rankings. The two countries also had some of

Low-income women and girls in countries whose majority religions promulgate negative or restrictive attitudes toward females, often suffer the most severe discrimination. In the poorest countries this has sometimes led to less access to nutritious food and medical services—demonstrated by unusually high female mortality rates and male-to-female population sex ratios.⁹⁴ In parts of Asia, low female status has been linked to high incidences of domestic violence, to poverty-stricken families selling daughters or permitting them to become sex workers, and to the high HIV infection rates among those girls and women.⁹⁵ In a number of Buddhist, former Buddhist, Muslim, and Hindu countries, low female status is also associated with unusually high male-to-female ratios at birth—evidence that the selective abortion of female fetuses is common, and that in some areas female infanticide is still practiced.⁹⁶

In China, Taiwan, South Korea, Vietnam, Singapore, and Nepal, there has been a record preponderance of male births since the early 1980s, when abortion and low-cost sonogram technologies allowing the

the highest employment rate gender gaps reported (*The Chosun Ilbo* “Korean Gender Earnings Gap Widest in OECD”). The latest (2009) OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index, which compares social inputs that favor gender equality, also found the East Asia and Pacific region to have significantly higher levels of gender-based discrimination than OECD countries in Europe and the Americas (which have Protestant, unaffiliated, and Catholic majorities).

⁹⁴ Asian Human Rights Commission; The East-West Center 49-53; Eswaran 433-454; Hesketh and Zhu 13271-13275; E. King and Hill; Klasen and Wink 285-312; L. C. Smith and Haddad *Explaining Child Malnutrition in Developing Countries 1999 and 2000*; and Summers 2-7.

⁹⁵ Asian Human Rights Commission; Khandu Lama 170; Khuankaew 22-26; Klunklin and Greenwood 46-61; Tewari; and *USA Today/Vishal Arora Religion News Service*.

⁹⁶ CIA World Factbook *Sex Ratio*; Das Gupta “China’s ‘Missing Girls’—Son Preference or Hepatitis B Infections?”; Das Gupta “Explaining Asia’s ‘Missing Women’” 529-535; The East-West Center 49-53; “Finding the Root Causes of Sex-Selective Abortions”; Hesketh and Zhu 13272-13273; Jacoby; Mahalingham, Haritatos, and Jackson 598-609; Miller 1083-1095; Sen 1297-1298; “Sex Ratio”; and World Bank *Global Monitoring Report 2007* 124-125. This imbalance is generally most severe in countries or areas where low-cost abortions and sonograms are widely available. In Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan, abortion is currently illegal, and statistics on illegal abortions are not available.

sex of unborn fetuses to be determined became widely available. The 1990 census in Korea suggested that nearly 80,000 female fetuses were aborted between 1986 and 1990 for purposes of gender selection—approximately 5 percent of all female births (The East-West Center 53). In China, the reported male-to-female ratio at birth has risen from a normal 106 males for every 100 females in 1979 to 120:100 in 2005, with a ratio of over 130:100 in some areas.⁹⁷ For second, third, and subsequent children in a family, the rates often climb significantly. A 1992 study in South Korea found that the male-to-female ratio for fourth births was an astounding 229:100 (Hesketh and Zhu 13274). It has been estimated that as a result of religious and cultural value systems and traditions that place a greater premium on male children and foster unfavorable attitudes toward females, between 1980 and the early 1990s, sex-selective abortions resulted in well over 100 million “missing females” in Asia and Africa. 44 million were “missing” in China alone (Sen 1297-1298; Hesketh and Zhu 13271-13275; and Klasen and Wink 285-312).

The impact of religious attitudes toward women on gender preference, female mortality, and cultural beliefs about females, is evident in disparities in sex ratios at birth and in overall population sex ratios among countries with Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, and Christian majority populations. In Protestant and Catholic majority countries in the Americas and Europe, female-selective abortion is rare except among immigrant populations, and sex ratios at birth and overall population sex ratios have not shown trends favoring males.⁹⁸ In 2001, North

⁹⁷ Hesketh and Zhu 13274; Jacoby; and World Bank *Global Monitoring Report 2007* 124-125.

⁹⁸ Andersson et al. 255-267; CIA World Factbook *Sex Ratio*; “Gender Preference in the United States”; Hank and Kohler 1-21; Hesketh and Zhu 13271-13275; Jacoby; Klasen and Wink 285-312; Miller 1083; Mosher; and “Sex Ratio.” A 2000 study of 17 Western European countries found normal birth rate sex ratios across Europe, with slight (if any) preference for balanced sex ratios, and a preference for girls in the Czech Republic, Lithuania, and Portugal (Hank and Kohler 1-21). A 2006 study (Andersson et al. 255-267), which used historical data from Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, found no evidence of gender preference among first and second births, and a desire for gender balance for third births, and heterogeneity across countries for fourth births. Census

America had an overall male-to-female ratio of 96.8:100. Europe's ratio was approximately 95:100. Africa's ratio was 99.8:100 and Latin America's ratio slightly lower. Asia was the only continent with an overall male-to-female population ratio of over 100—at 104:100.⁹⁹ Muslim and Hindu majority countries—where restrictive gender roles and the belief that women are inferior/secondary to men remain common—have also often been found to have unbalanced population sex ratios and higher female mortality rates, as well as greater gender inequalities in politics, work, and social relations.¹⁰⁰

In the present day, Protestantism provides an example of the strong impact that different interpretations of religious doctrine can have on women's opportunities, achievement, and status. The gradual liberalization of mainstream and liberal Protestant orders in the U.S. and Europe in recent centuries has led to a willingness among such denominations to liberally interpret or discount the small number of negative Biblical teachings about women, and rules limiting them (which predate, or were instituted after the time of Jesus). As a result, liberal Protestant groups and a number of mainstream orders now support full

figures from the Americas, Europe, and Africa currently show a markedly higher female-to-male ratio than is found in Asia—the result, not of male-selective abortion, but rather of natural greater female longevity, and of male behavioral choices, such as excessive drinking and smoking, dangerous driving, and higher rates of violence against self and others (Hesketh and Zhu 13272-13273; and Klasen and Wink 287).

⁹⁹ Hesketh and Zhu 13272; and CIA World Factbook *Sex Ratio*. Similar figures are reported in "Sex Ratio," UC Atlas of Global Inequality; Summers 2, 24; and E. King and Hill 2.

¹⁰⁰ CIA World Factbook *Sex Ratio*; Derne 203-227; Dollar and Gatti 12, 20; Hesketh and Zhu 13271-13275; J. A. Jacobs 157-164; Jayaweera 455-466; Kenworthy and Malami 241-244; E. King and Hill 2, 129-130, and 177; Mahalingham, Haritatos, and Jackson 598-609; Makhoul Obermeyer 33-60; Miller 1083-1095; Paxton and Kunovich 91-92; "Sex Ratio"; UNDP *Human Development Report 2009—Gender Empowerment Measure and Its Components*; and World Economic Forum *Global Gender Gap Reports 2007-2011*. Among the top 50 rankings in the 2009 UN report and 2007-2011 WEF reports, there were no Hindu majority countries, and only two Muslim majority countries. Those Muslim countries listed in the top 50 represented just 11 and 7 percent, respectively, of the Muslim countries surveyed.

gender equality.¹⁰¹ Liberal and mainstream Protestantism has, in fact, for some time been more supportive overall of equal rights, status, and opportunities for women than Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism, Daoism, Shintoism, and most other major world religions—a fact that has frequently been made evident in gender empowerment reports and statistics.¹⁰² Protestants’s liberal interpretations and/or rejection of misogynist and androcentric teachings and rules in the Bible have been facilitated by the Protestant tenet that the individual Christian has the right and ability to interpret the scriptures, and by the

¹⁰¹ M. L. Anderson 232-259; “Gender Roles in Christianity”; Protestant Gender and Sexuality; and D. L. Robert. A few progressive Protestant groups (such as the Quakers and Anabaptists) advocated equal status and rights for women as early as the Seventeenth century (“Gender Roles in Christianity”; Kinneer 85; Snyder and Huebert Hecht). In the Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries, liberal Protestants and Protestant missionaries played a central role in women’s rights movements in many countries, East and West, establishing the first schools and universities for girls and women in a number of countries, and lobbying for better and more equal rights, opportunities, and status for women (M. L. Anderson 232-259; and D. L. Robert).

¹⁰² Dollar and Gatti 12, and 20; Kenworthy and Malami 241-244; J. A. Jacobs 156-159; OECD *The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)* 2009; Paxton, Hughes, and Green 904, 914, and 916; Paxton and Kunovich 91-92; Siaroff 199-201, and 210-212; UNDP *Human Development Report 2009—Gender Empowerment Measure and Its Components*; and World Economic Forum *Global Gender Gap Reports* 2007-2011. As noted earlier, the latest (2009) OECD *Social Institutions and Gender Index* found the East Asia and Pacific region to have significantly lower levels of gender equality than OECD countries in Europe and the Americas (countries which have progressive and mainstream Protestant, unaffiliated, and Catholic majorities). Seven of the top ten countries in the 2009 UNDP *Gender Empowerment Measure* report (that is, those countries with the highest levels of gender equality), and seven of the top ten listed in the 2007-2011 World Economic Forum *Global Gender Gap Reports*, were countries with a Protestant majority. The remaining three top-ten countries in each report had Catholic or unaffiliated majorities. Thirteen of the sixteen Protestant countries included in the 2009 UNDP report (81 percent), eighteen of the twenty-four Protestant countries included in the 2010 WEF report (75 percent), and sixteen of the twenty Protestant majority countries included in the 2011 WEF report (80 percent) were among the top fifty rankings. Nineteen of the top twenty countries listed (95 percent) in the 2009 UNDP and 2010 WEF reports; twenty out of the top twenty in the 2011 WEF report; and forty-six of the top fifty countries listed in the 2009 UNDP report and 2007-2011 WEF reports (90 and 92 percent, respectively), were countries with a Christian majority or unaffiliated but former Christian majority. In contrast, just 11 percent of the Buddhist and former Buddhist majority countries surveyed in the 2009 UNDP report, and 22 percent of the Buddhist and former Buddhist majority countries surveyed in the 2007-2011 WEF reports were among the top fifty countries ranked.

fact that the Bible does not portray Jesus making any negative statements about women, or establishing special rules for them.

In recent decades, women's levels of education have risen so substantially in Protestant majority, unaffiliated majority, and some progressive Catholic majority countries in Western Europe and North America, they now comprise the majority of students on college campuses (currently 60 percent in the U.S.). In the U.S., in all but the fields of science, math, and engineering, women also make up the majority of graduate students (also currently 60 percent). In a number of Western countries, girls and women now earn better grades than men, and are receiving a disproportionate share of honors degrees.¹⁰³ According to U.S. census data since 2005, young women of all educational levels who work full-time in New York and several of the nation's other largest cities now also earn more than men of the same age (Roberts and Maldonado A1).

Such significant gains have not generally been seen among the female adherents of fundamentalist and conservative Protestant groups, however—groups that insist on a literal reading of the Christian Bible, and promote restrictive gender roles within the Church and family. Recent studies have shown that the followers of conservative and fundamentalist Protestant groups tend to have lower educational and career aspirations and attainment than those of liberal and mainstream Protestant denominations and other liberal religious groups—effects that have been shown to be strongest in women.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Lewin; D. Cho 450-462; Marsh and Seeshing Yeung 705-738; Whitmire; and UNESCO *The Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2003/2004* 148-151. The most recent (2003/2004) UNESCO *Education For All Global Monitoring Report* noted that in a number of countries where girls now receive an equal education (including the Caribbean, the U.K., France, and the U.S.), female students have outperformed male students in recent decades (148-151).

¹⁰⁴ Darnell and Sherkat 306-315; Glass and Jacobs 555-579; Keysar and Kosmin 49-62; Kosmin, Keysar, and Lerer 523-532; Lehrer "The Effects of Religion on the Labor Supply

Studies conducted by researchers in the U.S. in the 1990s, for example, found the levels of higher education attained by followers of conservative and liberal religious groups to differ by as much as 300 percent, depending on the nature and severity of the groups' beliefs (Kosmin, Keysar, and Lerer 523-532). A subsequent U.S. study conducted in 1995 showed that only 23 percent of (conservative Protestant) Pentecostal women between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four had received higher education, in comparison with 69 percent for the more liberal (Protestant) Episcopalians, and 84 percent for liberal Jewish female adherents (Keysar and Kosmin 54-56).

This latter U.S. study and a study based on Australian surveys conducted in the late 1980s, also demonstrate how widely Buddhist views and treatment of women may vary—and how significantly their effects may diverge—in various contexts, when doctrine and traditions are understood and practiced differently. The American study found that Buddhists and followers of other Eastern religions in the U.S. (where convert groups generally view women and men equally and treat them as such) tended to be liberal. Buddhists were thus grouped together with other “liberal religions” in the study. A high percentage of the female members of that group (77 percent) were found to have received higher education (Keysar and Kosmin 54-56).

In contrast, the Australian surveys showed that Buddhists and Muslims in that country then had highly limiting beliefs about gender and gender roles—attitudes “dramatically more” restrictive than those of the devotees of other religions. The study also found that such values had “a dramatic impact upon the level of [female devotees’] education, labor supply, and rate of return to education” (Vella 197, 202, and 209).

of Married Women” 281-301; Lehrer “Religion as a Determinant of Educational Attainment” 358-379; Lehrer “Religion as a Determinant of Economic and Demographic Behavior” 713-717; Lehrer “Religion, Human Capital Investments, and the Family in the United States” 39-56; Sherkat 4-5; Sherkat and Darnell 23-35; and Vella 199-211.

These studies serve as an important reminder that no religion is necessarily more supportive of women and gender equality than another. History provides examples of highly liberal, egalitarian, feminist movements, as well as staunchly conservative, patriarchal, and misogynist trends in all of the major world religions. The former have demonstrated that all religions can support gender equality and positive views of both genders.

Psychological and Social Evidence of the Harm Done to Those Who Discriminate

The harm done to those who are taught to look on women and other groups as inferior, and to treat them as such, is more difficult to measure than harm done to those who are subject to discrimination. However, psychological and social studies offer ample evidence as to its nature. The 1952 report to the U.S. Supreme Court in the school segregation case cited earlier describes the findings of research on the effects on whites of early Twentieth century Southern states laws that discriminated against blacks—laws that were in essence the same as the rules and traditions through which Buddhist organizations discriminate against women:

Those children who learn the prejudices of our society are also being taught to gain personal status in an unrealistic and non-adaptive way. When comparing themselves to members of the [stigmatized] group, they are not required to evaluate themselves in terms of the more basic standards of actual personal ability and achievement. The culture permits and, at times, encourages them to direct their feelings of hostility and aggression against whole groups of people the members of which are perceived as

weaker than themselves. They often develop patterns of guilt feelings, rationalizations, and other mechanisms, which they must use in an attempt to protect themselves from recognizing the essential injustice of their unrealistic fears and hatred of [stigmatized] groups. . . .

[C]onfusion, conflict, moral cynicism, and disrespect for authority may arise in majority group children as a consequence of being taught the moral, religious, and democratic principles of the brotherhood of man and the importance of justice and fair play by the same persons and institutions who, in their support of . . . [discrimination] and related practices, seem to be acting in a prejudiced and discriminatory manner. Some individuals may attempt to resolve this conflict by intensifying their hostility toward the [stigmatized] group. Others may react with guilt feelings, which are not necessarily reflected in more humane attitudes toward the [stigmatized] group. Still others react by developing an unwholesome, rigid, and uncritical idealization of all authority figures—their parents, strong political and economic leaders . . . [T]hey despise the weak, while they obsequiously and unquestioningly conform to the demands of the strong whom they also, paradoxically, subconsciously hate. . . .

Studies have shown that from the earliest school years children are not only aware of the status differences among different groups in the society but begin to react with the patterns described above. . . . [Discrimination] imposes upon individuals a distorted sense of social reality . . . leads to a blockage in the communications and interaction between the two groups . . . increase[s] mutual

suspicion, distrust, and hostility . . . perpetuates rigid stereotypes, and reinforces negative attitudes toward members of the other group (Brown v. Board of Ed., Appendix to Appellants' Briefs; and Clark, Chein, and Cook 495-501).

Numerous subsequent studies and historical accounts of groups and nations that have stigmatized and oppressed other peoples, confirm the above committee's findings. These studies and reports likewise demonstrate that those who are taught to look down on others, or discriminate against them, often develop pride and egocentric tendencies in relation to stigmatized groups, based on learned beliefs that they are superior to those who are the objects of group prejudice. These studies and accounts also show that such beliefs tend to encourage these individuals to disparage, scapegoat, or project fears, anger, and personal shortcomings onto the members of stigmatized groups, and to subject them to unequal or otherwise harmful treatment. Members of stigmatizing groups who fail to live up to false expectations of superiority often also suffer from further afflictive mental states, such as self-hatred, resentment, negativity, and envy.¹⁰⁵

Psychological research also shows that, when faced with stereotype threat, subjects who believe that intelligence and other abilities are changeable generally do better than subjects who believe they are innate or fixed.¹⁰⁶ Buddhist teachings that males are innately

¹⁰⁵ The following are examples of the many historical accounts and psychological and social studies that provide evidence of the harm done to those who are taught to discriminate against others: Abu-Ghaida and Klasen; Allport; Bowser and Hunt; Clark, Chein, and Cook; Derne 203-227; Fanon *Black Skin, White Masks*; Fanon *A Dying Colonialism*; Fanon *Toward the African Revolution*; Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth*; Feagin and Eckberg 1-20; Griffin; Grossack 71-74; Gutschow; Khuankaew 22-26; Lutterman and Middleton 485-492; Mahalingham, Haritatos, and Jackson 598-609; Milgram "Behavioral Study of Obedience" 371-378; Milgram *Obedience to Authority*; Peters *The Eye of the Storm*; Peters *A Class Divided*; Richeson and Shelton 287-290; Seldon; Shih "Theory and Practice" 131-143; Wing Sue *Microaggressions and Marginality*; Wing Sue *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*; and Zimbardo *The Lucifer Effect*.

¹⁰⁶ See the studies referenced in footnote 88.

superior to females thus make those who are taught to believe they possess intrinsically superior faculties, as well as those who are led to see themselves as inherently inferior, more vulnerable to the harmful effects of negative and limiting stereotypes.

All children, whether male or female, are likely to suffer from the adverse effects of the discriminatory treatment of their mothers, who are central to their psychological, physical, social, and cognitive development. Dozens of studies have found direct and indirect relationships between women's overall status, levels of education, general welfare, health, and political and economic opportunities, and those of their children and countries.¹⁰⁷

For example, research has shown that low status and education and poor health limit women's opportunities and freedoms, giving them less independence and interaction with others, restricting their access to new knowledge, and damaging their self-esteem and self-expression, and thus the quality of the care they provide their children (Engle, Menon, and Haddad). In developing countries, one additional year of girls' education has been found to reduce infant mortality by 5-10 percent (Schultz "Returns to Women's Education" 69; Summers 6), and women's education, status, health, and overall welfare have proven to be among the most important factors in reducing child malnutrition (Smith and Haddad). Educated mothers have also been shown to be about 50 percent

¹⁰⁷ The following is a partial list of studies that have found direct and indirect relationships between women's overall status and that of their children and countries: Abu-Ghaida and Klasen; Behrman et al. 682-714; Cochrane, O'Hara, and Leslie; Datt and Jolliffe; Datt, Simler, Mukherjee, and Dava; Eswaran 433-454; Frey and Field 228; Haddad 96-131; E. King and Hill; Klasen *Does Gender Inequality Reduce Growth and Development?*; Klasen and Wink 298-299; Lam and Duryea 160-192; Mahalingham, Haritatos, and Jackson 598-609; Psacharopoulos; Psacharopoulos and Patrinos; Schultz "Investments in the Schooling and Health of Women and Men" 710-733; Schultz "Returns to Women's Education" 51-99; L. C. Smith and Haddad *Explaining Child Malnutrition in Developing Countries 1999 and 2000*; Subbarao and Raney 105-128; Summers; and World Bank *Global Monitoring Report 2007*.

more likely than uneducated mothers to immunize their children (Gage, Sommerfelt, and Piani 295-309). In many countries, research has also demonstrated that the education of women and girls has a more positive impact on children's schooling than that of boys and men (Benavot 14-32; Filmer 5; Schultz, "Returns to Women's Education" 74; Summers; and World Bank *Global Monitoring Report 2007*).

For these and other reasons, female education offers an overall higher rate of return on investments (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos 2): a 1999 100-country study by the World Bank showed that even in countries with higher levels of initial education, increasing the percentage of women with a secondary education by 1 percent boosts annual per capita income growth by 0.3 percentage points (Dollar and Gatti 20). Similar findings have been made by development banks, many of which are now choosing to give micro-loans to poor women in developing countries because women have proven to be more reliable than men in repaying loans, and in using their profits to provide better food, health care, and education to their children (Grameen Dialogue; M. A. Kahn). Female empowerment has, in fact, been shown to be among the key determinants of a country's economic growth and human development; investments targeted at raising women's status have proven to be among the most effective available, especially in the world's poorest economies.¹⁰⁸

Increasing female empowerment has also been shown to significantly lower fertility rates¹⁰⁹—as have religious ideologies that

¹⁰⁸ See Abu-Ghaida and Klasen; Behrman et al. 682-714; Benavot 14-32; Dollar and Gatti; Klasen *Does Gender Inequality Reduce Growth and Development?*; Klasen "Low Schooling for Girls, Slower Growth for All?" 345-373; Psacharopoulos; Psacharopoulos and Patrinos; Schultz "Investments in the Schooling and Health of Women and Men" 694-734; Schultz "Returns to Women's Education"; Summers; and UNESCO *The Education For All Global Monitoring Report, 2003/2004*.

¹⁰⁹ Female empowerment has been found to be an important factor in determining fertility rates and child and mother mortality (Abu-Ghaida and Klasen 7; Ainsworth, Bee-ge, and Nyamete 85-122; Castro Martin 187-202; Eswaran 433-454; Lam and Duryea 160-

support gender equality.¹¹⁰ (The impact of religious attitudes toward women on fertility rates is ever more important, as human overpopulation will increasingly be among the world's greatest environmental problems.) The unbalanced male-to-female population ratios in several Buddhist majority and former Buddhist majority countries, which have resulted from female-specific abortion and high female mortality rates (an imbalance of as much as 12 to 15 percent in some areas), are also expected to result in social problems that will affect women and men, alike: increased anti-social behavior, crime, violence, prostitution, and civil unrest (Hesketh and Zhu 13274-13275).

Finally, because the Buddhist *Dharma* teaches that in harming others one harms oneself, Buddhists must conclude based on the findings summarized here, that those who are taught to look down on women and other groups, or to treat them as inferior or flawed, will also be harmed. Buddhist teachings on karma indicate that past negative karma is purified as it is received: being subject to discrimination (which Buddhists generally believe results from past negative karma—though passages in the *Tripitaka* indicate that such an assumption is oversimplistic¹¹¹) is therefore not in itself a spiritual problem—only a

192; Oppenheim Mason 284-300; and Schultz “Investments in the Schooling and Health of Women and Men” 694-733). According to a 1999 World Bank study, for every year of education females in developing countries receive, their fertility drops by roughly .23 (Klasen *Does Gender Inequality Reduce Growth and Development?* 22). An analysis of 72 developing countries found that doubling the enrollment of females in secondary education would reduce average fertility rates from 5.3 to 3.9 children per woman (Subbarao and Raney 113). A study conducted in Brazil found that illiterate women gave birth to an average of over 6 children each, but highly literate women had an average of 2.5 (Lam and Duryea 160-192; UNESCO “Women and Girls: Education, Not Discrimination!” 2). Studies in developing countries have found that an extra year of female schooling reduced female fertility by approximately 5 to 10 percent (Summers 6).

¹¹⁰ “Fertility Rates by Age and Religion”; Frejka and Westoff; Lehrer “Religion as a Determinant of Economic and Demographic Behavior” 707-726; and Lehrer “Religion, Human Capital Investments and the Family in the United States” 39-56.

¹¹¹ In the *Devadaha Sutta*, MN 101, *Sīvaka Sutta*, SN 36.21, and *Titthā Sutta*, AN 3.61 Śākyamuni indicates that the belief that all experience is due to past actions is oversimplistic and an incorrect understanding of the nature of reality. In the *Sīvaka Sutta* he states

mundane one. However, the creation of new “unpurified” negative karma is considered a spiritual problem that is to be greatly feared, because it is believed to impede future spiritual progress. According to this Buddhist doctrine, it is those who view others negatively or discriminate against them whose karmic burdens are heaviest.

Conclusion

The overall findings of hundreds of psychological and social studies, briefly summarized in this article, demonstrate that discriminatory treatment and concepts of self and others tend to create self-fulfilling prophecies—they instill beliefs that in turn affect behavior and achievement. Expressed succinctly by one team of researchers in what has come to be known as The Thomas Theorem: “If [humans] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (W. I. Thomas and D. S. Thomas 572).

The studies also show that discriminatory views and practices inculcate distorted concepts of inherently existing, constant, independent *selves* and *others*—and, until there is some interceding force for change—they tend to be self-perpetuating.¹¹² When children, and

that present experience is the result of a variety of causes and conditions, only some of which are *kamma*. Those causes and conditions include such things as “bile...phlegm... internal winds...a combination of bodily humors...a change of the seasons...uneven care of the body...and harsh environment” (trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, Access to Insight). Passages in the *Nibbedhika Sutta*, AN 6.63 also imply that not all experience is due to *kamma*.

¹¹² Reports on the following and many other studies cited earlier in this article note the self-fulfilling and/or self-perpetuating nature of expectations, suggestions, and concepts of self and others: Abu-Ghaida and Klasen 7; Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Appendix to Appellants’ Briefs; Chen and Bargh 541-560; Clark, Chein, and Cook 495-501; Darley and Fazio 867-881; Darley and Gross 20-33; Klasen “Low Schooling for Girls, Slower Growth for All?” 347; Krishna 1104-1107; Martin and Halverson “A Schematic Processing Model of Sex-Typing and Stereotyping in Children” 1119-1134; Martin and Halverson “The Effects of Sex-Typing Schemas on Young Children’s Memory” 563-

many adults, are taught explicitly or implicitly (through repeated exposure to discriminatory treatment, expectations, or stereotypes), that a particular group is inferior to another, many will come to see them as such. In so doing, they will harm that group, and themselves.

This substantial body of research provides sufficient and reliable empirical evidence that had Śākyamuni seen women as incapable of achieving full enlightenment, or as inferior, or more flawed than men; had he set up special unequal rules to limit them; or had he taught such beliefs or rules to others, he would have harmed his disciples, their cultures, future generations, Buddhism, and Śākyamuni himself—just as those same views and practices harm Buddhists and entire cultures today. Such teachings and practices also convey, not only that it is acceptable, but that it is spiritually and morally sound to view entire segments of the population as inferior, and to establish social systems that treat them as such.

Equally important from a Buddhist perspective, these discriminatory views and practices are the antithesis of Right View, and they undermine the Middle Path by perpetuating identification with concepts of independent, constant, inherently existing selves and others (*attā/ātman*), and discriminatory thinking. According to the Buddhist *Dharma*, it is precisely by realizing that what we mistakenly perceive as inherently existing, separate selves and other(s) are, in fact, interdependent, subjective, and transitory illusions—constellations of constantly evolving compounded aggregates, subject to causes and conditions, and closely interconnected with ourselves and other beings and phenomena—that one can abandon self-clinging and discriminatory thinking, and bring an end to suffering.

574; McKown and Weinstein “The Development and Consequences of Stereotype Consciousness in Middle Childhood” 498-515; Phillips 2000-2016; and M. Snyder 183-212.

The harmful effects of negative and discriminatory views and practices arise due to, and confirm Buddhist theories on, those same characteristics of the phenomenal world noted above, which lie at the heart of the Buddhist understanding of the nature of reality: because we are interconnected and interdependent, inconstant, dependent on causes and conditions, and inseparable from what we perceive, and because “[a]ll phenomena are preceded by mind, ruled by mind, made by mind” (*Dhammapada* I, 1-2), our thoughts, words, and actions affect “everything we’re connected to.” As the Dalai Lama explains in his book, *The Universe in a Single Atom*:

The observer . . . is effectively a participant in the reality being observed. . . . The notion of a pre-given, observer-independent reality is untenable. As in the new physics, matter cannot be objectively perceived or described apart from the observer—matter and mind are co-dependent. This recognition of the fundamentally dependent nature of reality—called *dependent origination* in Buddhism—lies at the very heart of the Buddhist understanding of the world and the nature of our human existence (63-64). . . . The world, according to the philosophy of *emptiness*, is constituted by a web of dependently originating and interconnected realities, within which dependently originated causes give rise to dependently originated consequences according to dependently originated laws of causality. What we do and think in our own lives, then, becomes of extreme importance, as it affects everything we’re connected to (68-69).

Many passages in the *Tripitaka* and other *sūtras* support the general findings of the hundreds of studies described in this article—that viewing others negatively or as inferior, or otherwise discriminating

against them, is harmful, and reifies a false sense of self. In the *Mahā-Assapura Sutta*, MN 39, the Buddha cautions his followers not to “exalt ourselves or disparage others.” In the *Sutta Nipata* and the *Samyutta Nikāya*, he asserts that one should not construe views, knowledge, spiritual paths, practices, oneself, or others as superior, inferior, or equal (*Paramaṭṭhaka Sutta*, Snp 4.5; *Purābheda Sutta*, Snp 4.10; and *Samiddhi Sutta*, SN 1.20), as to do so is to “grasp at perceptions and views” (*Māgaṇḍiya Sutta*, Snp 4.9), and is a serious obstacle.¹¹³ One who views “self” or “others” as such, the Buddha insists, is attached to something that does not exist (inherently existing, separate selves/other(s)) and does not see the true nature of reality:

When any ascetics and brahmins, on the basis of form . . . on the basis of feeling . . . perception . . . mental formations . . . on the basis of consciousness [(the five aggregates)] . . . regard themselves thus: ‘I am superior’ or ‘I am equal’ or ‘I am inferior,’ what is that due to apart from not seeing things as they really are? . . . [A]ny kind of form whatsoever . . . any kind of feeling . . . perception . . . mental formations . . . any kind of consciousness whatsoever . . . should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self’ [(or another or another’s)] (*Soṇa Sutta*, SN 22.49).¹¹⁴

In the *Nidāna Samyutta* in the *Nidāna Vagga* (The Book of Causation, SN 12.1-93), the Buddha conveys that what we deludedly perceive as self/other(s) should be understood instead as fleeting, interconnected processes that arise dependent upon ignorance, desire,

¹¹³ MN 39, SN 1.20, Snp 4.5, Snp 4.9, and Snp 4.10, trans. Thanissaro, Access to Insight. The Buddha makes a similar statement in the following passage in the *Samyutta Nikāya*: “To be attached to one thing (to a certain view) and look down on other things (views) as inferior—this the wise men call a fetter” (SN (PTS) p. 151 v. 798, cited in Walpola 10).

¹¹⁴ SN 22.49, trans. Bodhi *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha* 887-888.

attachment, the five aggregates, and the six sense bases. According to the *Khandha Saṃyutta* (*Khandha Vagga*, SN 22.1-159), mere attachment to, or identification with any of the five aggregates (that is, with anything at all)—let alone with gender or the sorts of negative views of women attributed to Śākyamuni in the Buddhist *sūtras*!—is a form of self-clinging that shows a lack of wisdom and insight, and is the primary obstacle to awakening. The *Somā Sutta*, SN 5.2, expresses this same view, explicitly spelling out that identification with gender (or with “anything at all”) makes one a fit subject for the devil to tempt.

The Buddha repeatedly affirms that the uprooting of all discriminatory views and prejudices is essential to awakening: “*Tathāgata*¹¹⁵ . . . teach the *Dhamma* for the elimination of all view-positions, determinations, biases, inclinations, and obsessions; for the stilling of all fabrications; for the relinquishing of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; Unbinding” (The *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, MN 22).¹¹⁶ “The *Tathāgata* . . . is [e]qual toward all things [and] does not discriminate between them” (*Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sutta*).¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ The term *Tathāgata* refers to a Buddha (fully enlightened being).

¹¹⁶ MN 22, trans. Thanissaro, Access to Insight.

¹¹⁷ Thurman, trans. *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sutta*. According to the following passages in the *Tripiṭaka*, the Buddha and others affirmed that the uprooting of all discriminatory views and distinctions is essential to awakening: *Kālakā Sutta*, AN 4.24; *Kokanuda Sutta*, AN 10.96; *Aggi Vacchagotta Sutta*, MN 72; *Samiddhi Sutta*, SN 1.20; *Duṭṭhatṭhaka Sutta*, Snp 4.3; *Suddhatṭhaka Sutta*, Snp 4.4; *Paramatṭhaka Sutta*, Snp 4.5; and *Māgaṇḍiya Sutta*, Snp 4.9. As noted earlier, non-discrimination is also a central theme of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and is discussed in such important texts as *The Huayan Sūtra*, *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra*, *Lañkāvatāra Sūtra*, *Lotus Sūtra*, and *Diamond Sūtra*. Like *The Somā Sutta*, a passage in the *The Lotus Sūtra* specifically warns practitioners not to discriminate on the basis of gender (or any other phenomena): “One should not make distinctions by saying, ‘This is a man,’ ‘This is a woman.’ Do not try to apprehend phenomena, to understand or to see them. These are what I call the practices of the bodhisattva. All phenomena are empty, without being, without any constant abiding, without arising or extinction. This I call the position the wise person associates with. From upside-downness come distinctions, that phenomena exist, do not exist, are real, are not real, are born, are not born” (Watson, trans. *The Lotus Sūtra* 200).

The Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna paths propose that we should view all sentient beings equally, as equal possessors of Buddha nature. The findings of the studies summarized here suggest that viewing others in this light will have positive effects. These findings have important implications, not only for Buddhism, but for all religions faced with interpreting or assessing the validity of passages in scriptures or traditions that imply one should view certain individuals or groups (including practitioners of other religions or sects) as inferior, or subject them to discriminatory treatment or other harm.

Scientific and social research leads overwhelmingly to the conclusion that such discriminatory treatment and views are unskillful, unwholesome, blameworthy, unwise, and “when adopted and carried out, lead to harm and suffering.” They do not accord with reason, or with the Discourses or the *Vinaya*, but are Wrong Views, and based on thoughts “unfit for attention.” According to Śākyamuni’s instructions in the *Tripitaka*, Buddhists should thus conclude that these teachings and rules are “not the *Dharma* . . . not the *Vinaya* . . . not the Teacher’s instructions”—and should abandon them.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ The conclusions reached in this final paragraph are based on the following instructions for assessing spiritual teachings, discussed earlier in this article: According to the Buddha’s instructions in the *Kālāma Sutta* (AN 3.65), reiterated in the *Sālha Sutta*, AN 3.66, *dhammas* should be abandoned if one knows them to be unskillful/unwholesome/blameworthy/criticized by the wise, or if “when adopted and carried out, [they] lead to harm and suffering.” In the *Jñānasāra-Samuccaya* the Buddha states that one should only accept teachings if, after thorough investigation and analysis, one sees that they are reasonable. In *Ambalaṭṭhikā Rāhulovāda Sutta*, MN 61, Śākyamuni instructs that mental, verbal, and bodily actions that lead to the harm of self or others are “unfit for you to do” and should be abandoned. In the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, DN 16, Part 4 the Buddha indicates that *dhammas* that do not accord with the Discourses or the *Vinaya* should be determined to be false/inaccurate *Dharma* and rejected. In the *Gotamī Sutta*, AN 8.53, the Buddha instructs that when one knows that *dhammas* lead to any of several states that are obstacles to spiritual practice (and so are forms of harm)—self-aggrandizement/discontent/entanglement/being fettered or burdensome, among others—“You may categorically hold, ‘This is not the *Dhamma*, this is not the *Vinaya*, this is not the Teacher’s instruction.’” Similar instructions are found in *Satthusāsana Sutta*, AN 7.80, which reaches the same conclusions.

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Unless otherwise stated, passages from the *Tripitaka* cited in this article were translated from the Pāli and/or carefully researched and drawn from several different editions by Sister Upalavanna, and by Bhikkhus Bodhi, Ñanamoli Thera, and Thanissaro (with occasional emendations for the sake of clarity and consistency). They were made available online thanks to the following invaluable *sutta* translation projects: Access to Insight, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/Tripitaka/index.html>; the Online Sutta Correspondence Project, <http://www.suttacentral.net/>; and Metta Net, <http://www.metta.lk/tipitaka/>.

The documentary film “A Class Divided,” which features some of Jane Elliot’s informal studies in discrimination, described earlier in this article, can currently be viewed free of charge online at: www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/divided/etc/view.html. Excerpts from films of Stanley Milgram’s studies on obedience to authority figures can also currently be viewed free of charge online at: <http://www.mediasales.psu.edu/>.

Abbreviations

AN	Āṅguttara Nikāya
Cv	Cullavagga
Dhp	Dhammapada
DN	Dīgha Nikāya
Khp	Khuddakapāṭha
MN	Majjhima Nikāya
SN	Samyutta Nikāya
Snp	Sutta Nipāta
Theri	Therīgāthā
Ud	Udāna
Vin	Vinaya

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