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A Proposal: The Religious Information Practices of New Kadampa Buddhists: Examining the Informational Nature of Buddhist Practice and a Prolegomenon to a Buddhist Theory of Information Practice

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A PROPOSAL:
The Religious Information Practices of New Kadampa Buddhists:
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Prolegomenon to a Buddhist Theory of Information Practice
by: Kelsang Legden (Roger Chabot)
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

To provide a background for the study, in this section I will introduce the theoretical concepts and population of study that will feature in this project. I begin with an introduction to everyday life information seeking and its intersection with religion and spirituality then follow this with an introduction of religious practices understood as information practices. Afterwards, I provide a rationale for studying Buddhists and provide an introduction to the particular Buddhist sect that will be the focus of the research.

1.1 STUDYING RELIGIOUS INFORMATION SEEKING: EVERYDAY LIFE AND BEYOND

The study of human information behaviour is often divided into separate areas to pragmatically differentiate these different streams of study from one another. There are two main areas into which this research is divided: (1) scholarly or professional and work-related contexts or populations; and (2) everyday life contexts and populations. Traditionally, studies of everyday life information behaviours have been referred to as “everyday life information seeking” (ELIS) but this narrow nomenclature fails to include everyday life information behaviours that are not ‘seeking’ (e.g. blunting, avoiding, etc.). Reijo Savolainen, a leading scholar in everyday life information behaviours, notes that

what defines everyday life information behaviours is the everyday itself “which refers to a set of attributes characterizing relatively stable and recurrent qualities of both work and free time activities. The most central attributes of everyday life are familiar, ordinary, and routine” (Savolainen, 2004, p. 1). Given the breadth provided by Savolainen’s definition, there are several contexts and populations within the realm of “everyday life” that warrant further investigation.

One of these contexts in particular is religion and spirituality. Religious information behaviours are information behaviours that are related to religious beliefs and practices. This dissertation relies upon the interpretation of certain religious practices, particularly those that involve the use of written text (both printed and oral), as information practices; I will discuss this in detail below. Understood within the everyday, these behaviours may include, variously, reading passages from scriptures, listening to an orally-delivered homily containing a religious message or investigating religious history on the Internet. These behaviours may be considered “everyday” as they comply with Savolainen’s characteristics of being “familiar, ordinary, and routine” and because they may be engaged in on a regular basis or with familiar resources. Indeed, the pursuit of a religious life is inseparable from the daily mental, verbal and physical actions that comprise it.

However, Emmons (1999) reports that it was early psychologist of religion Gordon Allport who was “the first to systematically distinguish religion as a means to an end and religion as a way of life” (p. 111). Religion possess a dual nature, one nature that is orientated to daily life and one that extends beyond it. Religion speaks to some human beings’ desire to seek that which is beyond the everyday. Existentialist

theologian Paul Tillich (1963) describes religion as “the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all other concerns as preliminary and which itself contains the answer to the question of the meaning of our life” (p. 4 in Emmons, 1999, p. 6). Within the context of information behaviour then, scholars need to account for the seemingly dual nature of religious information behaviours, to account for both the everyday life information behaviours and those that are seemingly “beyond” everyday life such as using information to satisfy deep, existential longings for meaning and negotiating living within an unpredictable reality. It is no longer satisfactory to understand everyday life information behaviours as confined to that which is “familiar, ordinary, and routine” but question whether “ELIS [is] sufficient in addressing information behavior within the context of the deeply meaningful, the unfamiliar, the extraordinary and profoundly emotional” (Clemens, 2015, p. 9).

Research already conducted within the realm of religious information behaviours is lacking an everyday life perspective. To date, the large majority of these studies conceptualize their informants (clergy and church leaders) as professionals who engage in work-related information practices to complete work-related tasks. Considering however the findings by the Pew Research Centre (2012) in their study of the global religious landscape that 84 percent of the global population professes some sort of religious affiliation, it is surprising that the existing literature on religious information seeking behaviours has uniquely focussed on this specialized group of religious professionals rather than on everyday religious adherents. Furthermore, Kari & Hartel (2007) lament that within the field of Library and Information Science (LIS), there is a lack of understanding of information phenomena within the realms of the “higher things

in life”; that is, “the pleasurable or profound phenomena, experiences, or activities that transcend the daily grind” (p. 1131). To date, LIS has been largely concerned with research contexts that are mundane and that focus upon ordinary, everyday-life problems. Instead, Kari & Hartel (2007) call for further research that begins to investigate the “significant dimensions of information phenomena that may have been overlooked” (p. 1131). One of the “higher” contexts that Kari & Hartel suggest investigating in a deeper manner within the context of LIS is religion and spirituality.

The existing literature on religious information, in addition to lacking examples of everyday life information behaviours, is missing perspectives from a variety of religious and spiritual traditions. The studies that comprise the existing literature are primarily concerned with examples and contexts within Western religious traditions, with the large majority focussing on various denominations within Protestant Christianity. Examples from Eastern religious contexts such as Buddhism are completely absent at present.

Thus, this dissertation plans to address this gap within the literature by taking Buddhists as a population and as a context to exploring religious everyday life information behaviours as well as the boundaries of everyday life information behaviours. In particular, this dissertation will examine the information behaviour of Western convert Buddhists who have come to Buddhism from a different religious tradition or no religious tradition. This dissertation seeks to describe and potentially explain a wide range of everyday life information behaviours of Buddhists from the behaviours themselves to the potentially profound needs that enable these behaviours and the uses of the religious information. The dissertation will also investigate the boundaries of everyday life information behaviours by examining the data arising from

the content analysis and interviews against existing everyday life information seeking models as well as against models derived from the data. By examining Buddhist religious phenomena through an information studies lens, it is hoped that this study can bring to fruition some potential understanding on the more fundamental or profound ways that information impacts humans beings.

1.2 RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AS INFORMATION PRACTICES

As I mentioned earlier, this dissertation relies upon the interpretation of certain religious practices as information practices. Since this is a pivotal concept for my dissertation, I will outline it here more completely.

On an everyday level, viewing religious practices as information practices hinges on viewing written and oral religious teachings as information (understanding information in a common sense way). Also viewing this connection, Kari (2007) writes, "From the viewpoint of information research, it is enlightening to realize that a religion actually boils down to its scriptures" (p. 937). I have deemed this type of information 'religious information' for lack of a better description at this time to distinguish it from ordinary 'secular' information. Within the existing religious information behaviour literature of Christian clergy the Bible and its contents are frequently mentioned as an information source and as information itself.

Within the Buddhist tradition, the teachings of Buddha are called *Dharma*. Dharma comes from a Sanskrit word meaning 'to hold.' The Dharma derives from the insights that Buddha attained through his meditation practice and especially through his

Enlightenment which is the soteriological¹ goal of Buddhism. Dharma can be understood in two ways. First, there are the *Dharmas of Scripture* which refer to the written and spoken forms of Dharma such as Dharma texts and commentaries and oral teachings or recitations. In my own experience as a practicing Buddhist in Canada for more than ten years, there have been many times when I have heard the word ‘information’ used to describe the Dharma by teachers in my tradition. For example in a recording of the introduction to the 2015 Ontario Dharma Celebration in Toronto, Ontario on January 23, 2015, Gen Kelsang Chögyan (the teacher) refers to the Dharma as “advice” and as “instructions” in her talk invoking a sense of information that is technical rather than factual and “how-to” rather than “know-that”. Also, religious studies scholar Coleman (2002) refers to the Dharma as “Information and advice” (Coleman, 2002, p. 188).

The second type of Dharma is comprised of the *Dharmas of Insight* which refer to the realizations of those teachings within the mind of the practitioner. Realizations are “A stable and non-mistaken experience of a virtuous object that directly protects us from suffering” (Realization, 2015). For example, Buddhist texts contain instructions on how to develop compassion for other living beings. The instructions on how to accomplish this realization of compassion comprise the information which is present within Dharma books or taught orally. Instructions in this case of training in compassion may include thinking about or contemplating our own suffering and wishing to be free from it and then realizing that all other living beings wish the same thing. When the practitioner has generated a wish for all living beings to be free from suffering (the Buddhist definition of

¹ From Greek ‘soteria’, meaning salvation.

compassion) then the practitioner holds this object single-pointedly in concentration for as long as possible. Through continual training in the meditation on compassion, eventually and gradually it will become inseparable from the mind. Compassion becomes an instinct that accompanies every action of mind; it unceasingly manifests within the lifeworld of the practitioner and because this wish creates a calm and peaceful state of mind, it functions to prevent suffering from arising as the mind cannot hold a negative and positive state of mind at once.

The description above of the generation of the Dharmas of insight also invokes a series of information behaviours or practices that involve religious information. Case (2012) suggests that information behaviour “encompasses information seeking as well as the totality of other unintentional or passive behaviours (such as glimpsing or encountering information), and purposive behaviours that do not involve seeking such as avoiding information” (p. 5) while Savolainen (2008) defines an information practice as “a set of socially and culturally established ways to identify, seek, use, and share the information available in various sources” (p.2). Stated simply, information behaviours and practices describe what people *do* with information or how they *interact* with information. So when Gyatso (2013) describes Dharma practice, “Dharma practice is quite simple because all we need to do is receive correct Dharma teachings by listening to qualified Teachers or by reading authentic books, and then to mix our mind with these teachings by meditating on them” (p. 40), then it becomes very clear that Buddhist religious practices are information behaviours and practices. Information is the Dharma, and listening, reading and meditating are information practices because they are the manner in which a person *does* something with information.

Doing something with written or spoken Dharma is the most important aspect of Dharma practice. Written and spoken words are signposts; they point to the *meaning* of what they represent, meaning which is accessed only through actively engaging with what is expressed in the words of the text or oral teachings. Only then do the words function to provide freedom from suffering, such as in the example of compassion above. The meaning of the words, the actual experience of compassion within the mind, is an opponent to suffering. Gyatso (2011) writes:

Through studying many Buddhist texts we may become a renowned scholar; but if we do not put Buddha's teachings into practice, our understanding of Buddhism will remain hollow, with no power to solve our own or others' problems. Expecting intellectual understanding of Buddhist texts alone to solve our problems is like a sick person hoping to cure his or her illness through merely reading medical instructions without actually taking the medicine. (p. ix)

It is pivotal then to study the physical and especially mental engagements with Dharma information and to understand these behaviours and practices as they relate to their causes (needs) and effects (uses) in addition to the words themselves. The examination of these information behaviours and practices also allow for further investigation into the nature of information as it transforms into its equally elusive cousin within LIS scholarship, wisdom.

1.3. WHY STUDY BUDDHISM AND BUDDHISTS?

Besides Buddhism's under-representation in the LIS literature and my own personal familiarity with Buddhism, there are other reasons why it would be valuable to study Buddhism within an information lens. Globally, Buddhism is growing. From a worldwide population of 488 million in 2015, the population is expected to expand to 511 million by 2030 (Pew Research Center, 2015). This dissertation will be relying in

particular upon “Western Buddhists” hailing from the Americas and Europe. In the majority of these areas, Buddhist populations are expanding. North America contains the largest population of Buddhist practitioners outside of Asia (Pew Research Center, 2012), and it is within North America that the largest amount of growth is expected during the next fifteen years (Pew Research Center, 2015). Within Canada, Matthews (2006) notes that “the numbers of Buddhists in this country have increased dramatically in roughly the past twenty years” (p. xii). In Europe, the population of Buddhists is supposed to roughly double by the year 2050 while populations in South America are expected to stay relatively small (Pew Research Center, 2015).

Western Buddhism, being a comparatively novel arrival to the Buddhist stage, is still generally understudied compared to more established Buddhist traditions. While this dissertation is not a religious studies dissertation, I suspect that it might be possible for it to inform the work that is being carried out in that field. Finally, studying Buddhism within LIS provides the field with a completely unused worldview from which to draw inspiration and innovation.

1.4 UNDERSTANDING THE PARTICULAR BUDDHIST CONTEXT OF THIS DISSERTATION

1.4.1 AN INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM

Because Buddhism is the main context in which my dissertation rests, and recognizing that some of my readers are not intimately familiar with this context, I have provided below an introduction to the history and philosophical foundations of Buddhism for their benefit. From a general introduction to Buddhism, the introduction telescopes

downwards to understand the finer contexts of Western Buddhism and the New Kadampa Tradition (NKT) within which the dissertation fieldwork rests.

Buddhism began in northern India in the sixth century before the common era. Hagiographical accounts of the life of Siddhartha Gautama, the historical Buddha, recount how he was born into the royal family of a small kingdom in what is now Nepal. Upon his birth, Siddhartha's father Suddodhana consulted a seer who foretold that his son would either become a great king or a great spiritual teacher. In order to assure his son's ascension to his throne, he kept Siddhartha confined to the palace and showered him with every luxury so that he would never experience pain or suffering or want to renounce his royal lifestyle.

Later, Siddhartha had the opportunity to leave the palace walls to explore life beyond them. During these excursions, Siddhartha encountered human sufferings of aging, sickness, and death and learned from his attendant that all humans must face these sufferings in their life without choice. Siddhartha was moved by these encounters and sought to find a way to solve them. On his outings, Siddhartha also encountered a wandering mendicant, who gave him a suggestion on how begin to find the answers on how to eliminate these sufferings.

Siddhartha soon thereafter left the palace to pursue the life of a renunciant; he cut off his royal locks and fashioned robes out of discarded cloth. He studied with several yogis and other renunciants, mastering various types of meditation. His teachers largely instructed him to train in conquering his earthly body as a way to achieve liberation, and so he ate only one grain of rice and drank only one drop of water per day. Consequently, he became severely emaciated. One day, after fainting due to

starvation and thirst, a young girl offered him some rice milk which he accepted. Revitalized, he realized that liberation from the sufferings of old age, sickness, and death were not to be found through the pursuit of luxuries and material goods through which one was distracted from these concerns, nor through extreme forms of deprivation, seeking to master the body; the answer was to be found in a middle way between these two extremes while employing meditative techniques. Siddhartha then was determined to find this answer for himself. He sat under a pippa tree, and meditated. He was confronted by maras and demons during his meditation, trying to divert him from his meditation. Undistracted, he conquered them and achieved enlightenment just before dawn. He then became known as the 'Buddha' meaning 'awakened one'.

The primary insight obtained during Siddhartha's enlightenment is that of the origin and cessation of suffering, also called *dukkha*. *Dukkha* includes not only gross forms of manifest mental and physical pain associated with birth, aging, sickness and death, but also more subtle, pervasive sufferings such as anxiety due to grasping at phenomena that are constantly changing and lacking an intrinsic essence. Garfield (2015) writes, "The origin of *dukkha* is in primal confusion about the fundamental nature of reality...[this] "Fundamental confusion is to take phenomena, including preeminently oneself, to be permanent, independent and to have an essence of intrinsic nature" (p. 2). This fundamental confusion leads to the performance of unskillful actions, which through a series of causes and effects (*karma*) will ripen as suffering experiences in the future, in particular rebirth having the appearance of one of six realms of existence that range from hellish to god-like. Unless the performance of negative actions is ceased,

then sentient beings will continue to take rebirth again and again in what is called *samsāra*, a continuous cyclic existence in realms where suffering is experienced. Garfield (2015) continues, “[samsāra’s] cure is at the bottom a reorientation toward ontology and an awakening (bodhi) to the actual nature of existence” (p. 2). The ontology of phenomena appearing to the mental continua of sentient beings is investigated through meditation. Once the primordial confusion has been identified, this pervasive belief that phenomena have intrinsic or inherent existence is negated and then eliminated through use of increasingly advanced levels of concentration (eventually a state of perfect concentration called *tranquil abiding*). Complementary to training in a correct ontology, is the practice of ethical conduct which is often formalized through taking vows to refrain from negative actions. This is because the practice of ethical misconduct (e.g. killing, lying, stealing, sexual misconduct, taking intoxicants) impairs the development of concentration which further hinders the practitioners’ development of liberating insight into a phenomenon’s ontology.

Not long after Siddhartha attained enlightenment he began to teach. The Buddha taught for roughly forty years throughout the Ganges river basin. He established a monastic order comprised of monks and nuns called the *Sangha*, who also spread the Buddha’s teachings. The Buddha died in 483 BCE. The Buddhist tradition remained an oral one until about five hundred years after the Buddha died, when some of the scriptures were finally written down. By 250 BCE, there were about eighteen to twenty schools of early Buddhism, divided over small issues of monastic discipline and scriptural interpretation. The modern Theravādin tradition is the only remaining school. The early schools are often called the Śrāvakayāna (from Sanskrit

śrāvaka, meaning ‘hearer’, plus *yāna* meaning ‘vehicle’), or Hīnayāna (individual vehicle) which are concerned for liberation from samsara for themselves alone. The modern Theravāda is practiced in Southeast Asian countries such as Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, and Burma.

The Mahayāna tradition (from Sanskrit *maha* meaning ‘great’) developed and became prominent in the first century CE. The Mahayāna schools are concerned with the *bodhisattva* ideal, that is practitioners of the Mahayāna are motivated by compassion and seek to liberate not only themselves from samsara, but all other living beings who are similarly trapped. The Mahayāna is practiced in China, Japan, Korea, Tibet, and Mongolia. The Vajrayāna (from Sanskrit *vajra* meaning ‘diamond’, but implying ‘indestructibility’) is built upon the foundations of the Mahayāna but incorporates Indian tantric practices as a method for reaching enlightenment. The Vajrayāna is often called the ‘quick path’ to enlightenment as its primary practice is bringing the future result of enlightenment into the path. The Vajrayāna flourished in India from around the seventh to twelfth centuries CE until invading Muslim armies forced the teachings northward into Tibet where it “became the most important area of tantric development” (Davidson & Orzech, 2003, p. 822).

Besides the three main divisions of Buddhism into Śrāvakayāna, Mahayāna, and Vajrayāna, various schools and divisions of Buddhism were caused by geographical movement of these Buddhisms across Asia, reaching as far west as Alexander the Great’s empire in Afghanistan, to the north to Tibet and Mongolia, and eastward, as far as Japan.

1.4.2 WESTERN BUDDHISM / BUDDHISM IN THE WEST

The globalization that was a result of the development of the modern world saw Buddhism move westward into Europe and the Americas into traditionally Christian countries and cultures. Two interrelated phenomena can be used to describe this westward movement of Buddhism. First is the establishment or emergence of distinctly western forms of Buddhism which are “homegrown” so-to-speak. However, these newer forms were not possible without their counterpart, Buddhism in the West, which describes Asian forms of Buddhism that have been transplanted into western contexts. Both of these descriptions are needed to adequately describe what is happening with Buddhism in the western world. This section will briefly outline a short history of Buddhism in the West, its common characteristics, popular employments of Buddhism in the West, and finally the challenges that it provides to the future of Buddhism globally.

Early European accounts of Buddhism “came from Christian missionaries who were usually more concerned to debunk it than to understand it” (Coleman, 2002, p. 56). Buddhism was also taken up by intellectuals, and in the nineteenth century “Europeans began a serious study of Buddhist texts” (Coleman, 2002, p. 56).

By the end of World War II, Buddhism was still largely engaged in as an intellectual pursuit, although it was beginning to have an effect on America’s Beat culture and their “vehement rejection of conventional American culture” (Coleman, 2002, p. 62), a sub-cultural value which remains a “powerful undercurrent in Western Buddhism to this day” (Coleman, 2002, p. 63). A notable contributor to this intellectual pursuit of Buddhism in the post-war period was Alan Watts, whose writings at this time made Buddhism easier for Westerners to understand (Coleman, 2002, p. 64). The

1950s remained an important decade for the development of Buddhism in the West. Notably, Shunryu Suzuki arrived in 1959 to teach Zen to Westerners. He founded America's first Zen Centre and Tassajara Hot Springs, America's first Buddhist monastery (Coleman, 2002 p. 70). The popularization of the Zen tradition also was forwarded by Vietnamese master Thich Nhat Hahn, who fled to the West during the Vietnam War. The 1950s also saw the beginning of the Tibetan diaspora as the Chinese invasion of Tibet forced many Tibetans into exile. Coleman (2002) notes,

Tibetan teachers...feared that their ancient tradition was in danger of being lost. After generations of isolationism, Tibetan teachers began to make a concerted effort to pass their tradition on to people from other cultures. Some of those teachers inevitably made their way to the West, where they exerted a powerful influence on the new Buddhism developing there. (p. 72)

Among the first of these pioneers were Tharthang Tulku who established the first Nyingma Centre in Berkeley, California and Kalu Rinpoche who established centres in Vancouver and Woodstock, New York (Coleman, 2002, p. 72). Another early and particularly influential teacher was Chögyam Trungpa who “more than any other single individual...shaped the face of Tibetan Buddhism in the West” (Coleman, 2002, p. 73) as he was “unique among his generation of Tibetans in his understanding of Western culture and his ability to adapt traditional teachings to the needs and experiences of his Western students” (Coleman, 2002, p. 73-4). He was, however, a controversial figure due to his alcoholism, his womanizing and the abandonment of his ordination vows. The modern Shambala tradition derives from his teachings. The modern Theravādins also came West, under S. N. Goenka, with their meditation tradition called *vipassāna* which is “the approach to the tradition most popular in the West” (Coleman, 2002, p. 78).

Despite the diversity present in western forms of Buddhism, scholars have generally noted that western forms of Buddhism share some common characteristics, and indeed some uniquely 'Western' qualities that are distinct from their Asian counterparts. "Western Buddhism is often described as "new" (Coleman 2001), 'eclectic and pragmatic' (Seager, 1999, p. 218), and "egalitarian" (Prebish, 1999, 70) (all as cited in Berkwitz, 2004, p. 144). Berkwitz (2004) also mentions that "A greater emphasis on the laity and the corresponding devaluing of monasticism, a preference for meditation over ritual, and widespread social and environmental activism" (p. 145) are further characteristics that are often employed to describe Western forms of Buddhism.

Again, the modern globalized world has had an effect on Buddhism in the West. In particular, Western Buddhisms have "been informed by continuous interaction with other faiths, both Eastern and Western, as well as the insights of the modern sciences and psychotherapies. All in all, the new Buddhism has a breadth of perspective unmatched in Buddhist history" (Coleman, 2002, p. 219). This interaction between a multiplicity of perspectives has led to Buddhism being employed in a different manner by each individual practitioner. Wallace (2002) notes,

As a general trend, it appears that the more religiously oriented Buddhists are, the less they tend to be eclectic in this sense of drawing from different Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions, and the more they emphasize practice of viewing the world by way of Buddhist beliefs. More secular Buddhists, on the other hand, seem less concerned with the intact preservation of ancient traditions, and the more pragmatically concerned simply with exploring what ideas and meditation techniques help them in their daily lives. The tension between these two trends —of tradition versus adaptation— is a prominent feature of Western Buddhism today" (p. 48)

As Coleman noted, Buddhism's westward movement has also seen it intersect with modern science, especially psychology and psychotherapy. Virtbauer (2012)

outlines three primary ways in which this relationship plays out. First, Buddhism acts as a “indigenous psychology” (p. 252) that parallels modern Western psychology as they share common features. Virtbauer (2012) notes that “Buddhism provides psychological methods of analysing human experience and inquiring into the potential and capacities of the human mind. Many Buddhist scriptures are kinds of psychological instruction manuals, which point to the practical realisation of their contents” (p. 253). Second, Virtbauer (2012) mentions how different parts of Buddhism, especially its theories of mind and mind training techniques, have been integrated into modern psychotherapy, instigating “innovation” and “newer psychotherapeutic approaches” (p. 254) such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy, and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (p. 255). These approaches “emphasise the relationship between the person and his/her feelings and thoughts. The healing process is based on the ability of the client to learn to become a neutral and mindful observer of thought processes without attempts to suppress or change them” (Virtbauer, 2012, p. 255). Finally, Virtbauer (2012) discusses how new movements within Western Buddhism have entered and continue to enter into “critical dialogue with scientific methodologies and findings” (p. 252). He notes that “Buddhism and modern science ideally share similar goals: Creating happiness by alleviating suffering through an increasingly refined understanding of how nature works” (p. 258). In particular, he points to Buddhism’s different understanding of reality as being experiential and interdependent and how this could undermine the “subject-object distinction...as a dogmatic instrument for tackling reality” (p. 258).

In the past, the different forms of Buddhism seemed to be more tightly controlled as certain geographical, ethnic, or cultural boundaries (often combined with political power) more easily delineated clearly who was an insider and an outsider and thus who had the ability to participate in Buddhism's ongoing creation. In the West however, these boundaries are more porous and less clearly defined due to the "melting pot" or "mosaic" nature of certain Western societies (in the United States and Canada, especially) as well as the prominence of individualism, where it is believed that an individual can direct his or her spiritual life as he or she sees fit, regardless of existing boundaries. This leads scholars and practitioners alike to ask, "what is Western Buddhism and who gets to decide what it is?" (Berkwitz, 2004, p. 141). As older and more traditional forms of Buddhism adapt to Western needs and vice versa, there arise "contested issues of authenticity and change in religious traditions" (Berkwitz, 2004, p. 141) which has led to certain Buddhist new religious movements being excluded from the larger global Buddhist community. It seems that in some cases at least, "Western Buddhism just seems too different to really be Buddhism" (Coleman, 2002, p. 219). However, this opinion likely arises from those with spiritual and cultural capital and authority and who have a vested interest in maintaining that capital and authority. For example, Hannah (2010) discusses an incident at a conference for Buddhism and women where Tibetan nuns were in conflict with Western feminists about the reestablishment of the bhikkhuni (nun) ordination lineage. The Tibetan nuns wanted to retain the spiritual capital they possessed as indigenous Tibetans over Tibetan Buddhism, despite their continued lack of status and continued subjugation to the monks. The nuns felt they had this power because of their inherited religious tradition;

they felt that they could control the “Tibetan” aspect of Tibetan Buddhism and therefore the whole tradition (Hannah, 2010). Thus, more novel forms of Buddhism such as those arising out of the West and perhaps sharing the same lineages and teachers are delegitimized by those who possess the ‘indigenous’ spiritual and cultural capital to do so. Ultimately, however, these delegitimizations are temporary. Bhushan & Zablocki (2009) write

and yet, if somehow, over time [this tradition] grows and acquires institutional longevity, at some point, as Mark Blum argues, even innovations like these could become part of Buddhism’s global diversity. After all, many of the ‘new Buddhist schools’ of Japan were suspect of authenticity at their inception. Thus, the whole history of change in Buddhism can be read through the lens of continual struggles over issues of appropriation. (p. 6)

One day in the future, these new Buddhisms may have accumulated enough of their own spiritual and cultural capital to be legitimately included within the global Buddhist community.

1.4.3 THE NEW KADAMPA TRADITION

The New Kadampa Tradition (NKT) notes its beginnings, as do all Buddhist lineages, with the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni. Lineage is important in Buddhism because it establishes the authenticity of the teachings, so the teachings are not taken as merely fictions. The following is a brief history of the Kadampa lineage, noting prominent figures within it. The founder of the original Kadam school is Atisha (982-1054 CE), who was a Bengali master who was invited to Tibet to further the spread of Buddha’s teachings in Tibet. Atisha is especially renowned for a presentation of Buddha’s teachings known as *Lamrim* (Tib: stages of the path), which is a condensation

of all of Buddha's Mahayana sutra teachings into a graduated system of twenty-one meditations used to establish a spiritual foundation for higher teachings.

While "Atisha did not set out to create a new Tibetan Buddhist order" (Kapstein, 2006, p. 98), a new Buddhist order was established based on his outlook on practice. Kapstein (2006) reports that the Kadampa "came to be distinguished by their ascetic and moral rigor in the pursuit of the bodhisattva's path...During the next three centuries the legacy of the Kadampa...came to form part of the common inheritance of all Tibetan Buddhist orders" (p. 99). Atisha's lineage passed on eventually to Je Tsongkhapa (1357-1419) who considered himself a "rectifier of received tradition" as he re-established strict monastic discipline and promulgated the Indian Buddhist traditions of textual study and logic within the monasteries that he founded (Kapstein, 2006, p. 119-120). His teachings came to be known as *Gelug* (Tib: virtuous tradition). Kapstein (2006) reports that "[Tsongkhapa's] dedication to the Kadampa teachings of the progressive path of the bodhisattva [lamrim] was such that he and his successors often came to be thought of as 'new Kadampa' (p. 120). Tsongkhapa's tradition became the modern Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism. The lineage was then passed on to modern day lineage holders, such as Trijang Dorjechang (1901-1981) who was the spiritual guide of many prominent Gelug lamas and teachers.

Geshe Kelsang Gyatso (b. 1931), the founder of the NKT, was a student of Kyabje Trijang Dorjechang. He was born and raised in Tibet. He fled from Tibet to India in 1959 with many other Tibetans in response to the Chinese invasion. In 1977, he was invited to the Manjushri Institute in Ulverston, Cumbria, UK to teach the Dharma. In 1991, Geshe Kelsang Gyatso formally established the New Kadampa Tradition as an

independent Buddhist tradition. In particular, “The purpose of the NKT is to preserve and promote the essence of Buddha’s teachings in a form that is suited to the modern world and way of life” (“Modern Kadampa Buddhism,” para. 14). Despite its status as an independent tradition, Gyatso transmits Je Tsongkhapa’s lineage that he received from his own teacher, the ‘new Kadampa’, to his students. The name of the tradition is meant to invoke this lineage. The primary activities of Kadampa Buddhist centres and temples are comprised of three study programs: General Program (public drop-in classes), Foundation Program (systematic study of certain Buddhist texts), and Teacher Training Program (systematic study of certain Buddhists texts with retreat commitments). These programs are complemented by an assortment of chanted prayers and meditations. While primarily concentrated in European countries and in North America, the NKT spans also to South America, Asia, and African countries and comprises approximately 1200 centres and branches worldwide (“Kadampa Centres,” para. 1). Finally, it is important to note that there currently exists a division between the NKT and the Central Tibetan Administration (Tibetan Government-In-Exile) over the NKT’s continued reliance upon the deity Dorje Shugden, a deity whose nature and practice is disputed by the Central Tibetan Administration and Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama.

1.4.3.1 RESEARCH ON THE NEW KADAMPA TRADITION

The NKT has been featured in some research by those largely affiliated with the field of religious studies. However, there has not been much examination of the NKT beyond this field. Some notable inclusions to this research include Kay’s article (1997),

written shortly after the Dalai Lama's negative statements on Dorje Shugden, which sought to provide a larger context to the development of the NKT and the practice of Dorje Shugden. As such, Kay (1997) relates the development of the NKT by discussing the recent history of its 'parent' tradition, the Gelug sect of Tibetan Buddhism and its "historical and contemporary divisions" (p. 278) that provide a space for the NKT to form. In particular, he relates the story of Kelsang Gyatso's arrival in England at Manjushri Institute as a part of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), Gyatso's subsequent dissatisfaction of the FPMT's leadership, the development of the NKT in 1991 and then the crystallization of the different aspects of the tradition. Kay then outlines the Dorje Shugden debate and its main 'players', particularly noting the role of NKT in the ongoing Dorje Shugden controversy with a focus on the opposing political and theological arguments employed by the NKT.

Danyluk's (2002) study explores the complexity of the Western Buddhist identity and Western Buddhist practice and tries to dislodge conceptions of them as large, institutional, and unwavering. Her study in particular seeks to examine these from a feminist perspective to uncover the Western Buddhist woman's identity and practice. Danyluk engaged in personal interviews with attendees of four Toronto Tibetan Buddhist centres, one of which was the Toronto NKT temple. Danyluk sought to collect their experiences of these locales and their practice within them. Speaking about the NKT, Danyluk describes the temple and its programs. She also describes the practitioners there as conforming to Nattier's categorization of 'elite' Buddhists (that is, being white, European, upper middle class, with some post-secondary education) (Nattier, 1997, p. 75 in Danyluk, 2002, p. 45) and that they made the move to Buddhism because of an

attraction to a sense of tradition (rather than on one's own) and because they were adverse to traditional forms of Western religion and Western culture (p. 76).

Cozort's (2003) essay examines the educational programs of two Western Tibetan Buddhist organizations, Friends for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) and the NKT and compares them to their model, the curriculum for the "geshe" degree (commonly made analogous to a doctorate in Buddhist studies) that are awarded after completing a monastic education. Since the founders of these Western traditions, Lama Yeshe and Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, were both educated at Sera Je Monastery in Tibet (now re-established in India after the Chinese invasion), it is used as the model against which the comparisons are made.

Cozort then outlines the core educational programs in the FPMT, the Basic Program and the Masters Program, and outlines the different subjects and their companion texts. This is followed by a similar explanation of the NKT's Foundation Program and Teacher Training Program subjects and texts. Cozort (2003) notes that while there are some similarities, both the FPMT and NKT skip some subjects that traditionally Tibetan monks have spent many years studying (p. 236) such as debating and the Vinaya (monastic discipline). What is added to these Western programs that is not featured in the traditional monastic education is theory and preparatory meditations for the practice of Buddhist tantra. Cozort (2003) concludes, "All in all, the NKT and FPMT programs respond to the desires of Western Dharma students, who feel that Buddhism is mainly about meditation, who want their philosophy mixed with practice, and who want to progress as quickly as possible toward the higher tantric teachings" (p. 237).

A study by Silver, Ross & Francis (2012) reports on the “Jungian psychological type of New Kadampa Buddhists” in Canada. The Jungian psychological types form the basis of the popular Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. The sixteen types are created through the examination of two orientations (introversion and extraversion), two perceiving functions (sensing and intuition), two judging functions (thinking and feeling) and two attitudes (judging and perceiving) (Silver, Ross, & Francis, 2012, p. 1055). Questionnaires were distributed in person and via mail. Silver, Ross, & Francis found that Kadampa Buddhists in Canada “show clear preferences for introversion (68%), for intuition (68%), and for judging (71%). There is a balance between preferences for feeling (52%) and for thinking (48%)....the most frequently occurring complete types are INFJ (19%) and ISTJ (19%)” (p. 1061). While the sample size is small (n = 31), the authors make the conclusion that the psychological types typical of Kadampa Buddhists reflect their religious behaviour. For example, the predominantly introspective orientation of Kadampa Buddhists in the sample explains how they “explore the inward path and promote time for meditation, quiet contemplation, and solitude”, “encourage a personal quest” and “find their own path and to engage in hermeneutical dialogue with spiritual beliefs and practices” (Silver, Ross, & Francis, 2012, p. 1063).

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

As was mentioned in the introduction, studies of human information behaviour research have been typically divided into two broad categories: those studies which study scholarly or professional and work-related information behaviours and populations, and those that study everyday life information seeking (ELIS) behaviours

and populations. Generally, work-related studies explore those information behaviours which are engaged in by professionals, workers, and scholars in order to better understand how these individuals seek and use information that is related to the performance of their job or imposed task. On the other hand, ELIS is a loose catch-all for those studies that are considered “non-work”. ELIS studies primarily “ordinary, everyday” individuals engaged in activities that require the seeking and use of information during the conduct of their daily lives.

Within the realm of religious information behaviour, this division is also present. In order to further situate the study of the religious information behaviours and practices of Kadampa Buddhists, the prominent religious work-related and everyday life information studies that provide a basis for this study will be briefly presented, including an important subdivision of ELIS that deals with information behaviours in existential or profound contexts or situations. While this existing research is indispensable to this project, a study of the literature also brings to light gaps in the literature which this project hopes to address. Additionally, major ELIS theories will be presented and the opportunities that they provide for the study of religious information behaviour will be discussed.

2.1 WORK-CENTRED AND RESOURCE-CENTRED RELIGIOUS INFORMATION BEHAVIOUR STUDIES

Studies of religious human information behaviour and practices were first examined through the lens of Christian clergy as religious professionals, performing work roles. This early research is information resource-focused, largely concerned with what information resources clergy are employing to fulfill their work roles as preachers,

administrators and counsellors of their respective congregations. Of particular interest to these researchers are the factors that influence clergy members' choice of particular information resources when fulfilling these roles. This research also provides preliminary investigations into concepts (potentially) important to the dissertation such as religious information sources and the existence of existential information needs.

A series of doctoral dissertations makes up a majority of this research. Heralding the way is Porcella (1973) who investigated the information-seeking behaviour of clergy as it relates to their preaching role, noting in particular the influence of doctrinal viewpoints as a determinant for the selection of resources in the preparation of the Sunday sermon. Next, Allen (1987) investigated the religious information behaviours of Baptist clergy and church leaders in Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Honduras. She found that information seeking behaviours amongst those in the Central American countries and previously conducted studies were not dramatically different (Allen, 1987, p. 219) suggesting that theories of information-seeking “[are] not bound to one nation or culture, but that [they] may be applied to differing nations and cultures” (Allen, 1987, p. 222).

Phillips' doctoral dissertation examined information-seeking behaviours of Protestant ministers in Tarrant County, Texas. Similar to Porcella, Phillips investigated the relationship between the clergy member as a preacher and as a church administrator and his or her information seeking behaviour. Tanner's (1994) doctoral dissertation also addresses how and why ministers gather and disseminate information relative to the performance of their professional tasks (Tanner, 1994, p. 9). His study also considers in what ways “the pastor does and does not function as an information professional” (p. 2). Tanner (1994) elucidates how clergy are gatherers and

disseminators of spiritual knowledge (p. 99). Interestingly, he also reports on the “high degree of personal involvement with both their topics and information sources...the second most frequently used ‘source’ in the sermons I observed was the personal experiences of the pastor” (p. 321). This interpretation of self or personal experience as an information source corresponds to Dervin’s (2003/1999) definition of information as “sense made” (p. 150) as well as Pollak's (2015) definition of “information as experience” encompassing “sensation, emotion, fact, skill, knowledge, or understanding acquired or otherwise derived from interactive participation in a social or solitary context, or occurring at some point thereafter as a result of contemplation and reflection” (p. 255-56). Given that Tanner’s goal was to demonstrate how clergy members are gatherers and disseminators of spiritual knowledge, his finding that experiential information comprises a large part of his sample’s religious information behaviour begins the conversation about spiritual information or knowledge not necessarily being confined to material or documented manifestations of information.

Wicks (1999) builds upon the work of Porcella (1973) and Phillips (1992) by examining a “fuller” spectrum of a clergy member’s work roles as compared to earlier studies (i.e. preaching, caregiving and administering as compared to only one of these roles) and the information seeking behaviour associated with these roles. Later, Lambert (2010) presents another study of the information behaviour of clergy. Baptists are again the object of study. The focus of the study is information-seeking behaviour as it relates to Lambert’s respondents’ administrative roles. Most recently, a study by Saleh & Abu Bakar (2013) features the first non-Christians in the religious information behaviour of clergy literature examined here. The informants of Saleh & Abu Bakar’s

study were Muslim clerics—*Ulama*—in Borno State, Nigeria. In particular, they investigated the information-seeking behaviours of the *Ulama* in regard to the practice of their preaching and counselling roles. While the above studies all took a work-centred approach and conceptualized their informants as working professionals, Saleh & Abu Bakar’s study is the first to rely theoretically upon a theory of work-related information-seeking behaviour, the “Professional Information Searching Strategy Model” of Leckie, Pettigrew, & Sylvain (1996). They concluded that the findings of their study “could best be described as linear and procedural along the features of the behavior in the model” (p. 45).

In summary, these work and resource-centred studies focussed on the effects of the different roles that clergy perform within their religions, denominations, and congregations; nearly every study examined clergy as working preachers, administrators or counsellors. This was often examined in conjunction with other variables related to information seeking such as demographics and the effects of doctrinal positions. However, some of the more recent studies, particularly Tanner’s (1994), begin to point scholars towards a more person-centred focus.

2.2 PERSON-CENTERED, WORK-RELATED RELIGIOUS INFORMATION BEHAVIOUR STUDIES

The large majority of studies featuring religious information behaviours have been focussed on work contexts and emphasize the choice of information resources. More recent studies of work-related information behaviours have begun to explore religious information behaviour with a more person-centred focus, rather than a resource-centred focus. These studies continue to outline concepts that are

(potentially) important to the dissertation such as information behaviours that involve divine beings and the use of information sources as a religious practice.

The first of these these studies is a 2007 doctoral dissertation by Roland who examined the Sense-making of a single Lutheran minister as he interprets Christian scripture in preparation for the Sunday sermon. Roland's informant described the sermon preparation process as a "collaborative effort with the Holy Spirit" (Roland, 2007 p. 136) in which the Holy Spirit guided or had input into the selection of Scripture texts (p. 138-9). Roland (2007) theorized, using Dervin's Sense-making, that his informant's hermeneutical interaction with the Holy Spirit can be understood as "one of the many ways that an individual may make sense of his reality" that "combines connectivities both anchored in the real and soar beyond the real by faith" (p. 136). Next, Michels (2011) presents a very small discussion of religious everyday life information behaviours, specifically the use of prayer in the information seeking of church leaders. Respondents described the role of prayer in two ways: as a means of gathering information or as an information resource, and as a way to assist in interpretation, discernment or confirmation when evaluating information (Michels, 2011, p. 4). Following this closely, Michels' (2012) study sought to examine the question, "What is the [information seeking] experience like for leaders of churches in transition as they seek to answer the question of what God's will is for their churches?" (p. 17). Michels found that church leaders engaged in information seeking behaviours as a personal faith builder (a religious practice) and as a means to perform their roles as leaders within the church. Similar to his findings above, Michels found that prayer played a significant role in the information-seeking of these church leaders as they sought God's

will for their church. Michels' findings within a religious context provide some introductory examples in interpreting religious practices as information practices when they involve information. The work of the Finnish scholar Jarkko Kari, whose work is examined next, performs a similar function.

2.2.1 GAPS AND LIMITATIONS OF WORK-CENTRED STUDIES

After reviewing the literature of the information-seeking behaviour of clergy, it is evident that there is quite a narrow focus on Protestant Christian contexts—only recently, with Saleh & Abu Bakar (2013) has this literature branched out to include non-Christians. It is clear that studies of other religious contexts are needed, especially of Eastern religious contexts since none have been studied to date. Despite the long existing conceptual division in the information behaviour literature between work-related and everyday life information behaviours and practices, the division between work-related information behaviours and non-work related information behaviours can be also considered an artificial and arbitrary division because work *is* an everyday life activity as it is “familiar, ordinary, and routine” as per Savolainen (2004)’s characteristics of the everyday. The large majority of these studies uniquely examined the work-related information behaviours of clergy rather than including the personal religious practice of the clergy member, which would be more typical of an everyday life study. A personal religious practice of a clergy member is obviously present in the informant’s life otherwise they would likely not have become clergy members. It is time therefore to move beyond this specialized group of religious practitioners to the ‘everyday’ practitioner and examine their information needs as they perform their daily life.

Because they are not religious workers, the examination of their religious information behaviours should occur within the realm of religious everyday life information behaviours which is also understudied.

2.3 RELIGIOUS EVERYDAY LIFE INFORMATION BEHAVIOUR STUDIES

2.3.1 THE WORK OF JARKKO KARI ON THE PARANORMAL

Jarkko Kari is a Finnish scholar currently at the University of Tampere in Finland. A large part of his work investigates the spiritual and paranormal and everyday life information behaviours and practices. Noting the virtual non-existence of information studies concerning the spiritual (p. 3), Kari's doctoral dissertation (2001) examined the needs, seeking and outcomes of information concerning the paranormal. Many of Kari's (2001) findings are relevant to the this study. In particular, Kari found that some people consulted information and information sources which they regarded as paranormal (p. 209). Kari (2001) further suggests that "the questions representing information needs are more versatile than what has been believed to date," (p. 210) making room for further explanation and exploration of what this range of questions could possibly be. This is related to another conclusion: that within the field of information studies, scholars have forgotten to explore "the perceptual potentiality of human beings for obtaining and processing information" (p. 210), calling for more research into occasions where the perceptual boundaries of human beings are challenged.

Kari's more recent research on spiritual and paranormal information comes from a pair of content analyses of published spiritual and paranormal texts in the Finnish language. First, in 2009, Kari examined informational uses of information with an eye to

providing finer detail into the complexities of information use theories and to create a taxonomy of the informational uses of spiritual information. In 2011, Kari explored the outcomes of spiritual information. He defines an information outcome as “any process that ensues from receiving a message” (2011, p. 63), a phenomenon that is similar to information use. The content analysis reveals five primary types of information outcomes from spiritual information which Kari (2011) defines as “a message originally provided or received by extraphysical means” (p. 63).

2.3.2 OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH CREATED BY PERSON-CENTRED & EVERYDAY LIFE-CENTRED STUDIES

While scholars like Kari have pioneered the research into religious everyday life information studies, there remains a paucity of examples; there is certainly more room for further studies of religious everyday life information that take new and fresh contexts that differ from those already studied. With more examples of religious everyday life information studies, scholars may be able to discover trends and patterns through comparing and contrasting the information behaviour of a variety of faith groups. For example, with more religious everyday life information studies, scholars may be able to investigate more fully the nature of religious information behaviour. More specifically, are religious information behaviours unique because they are religious, or are they merely “ordinary” behaviours in a religious context? Are there some information behaviours that are only present within religious contexts or in certain religious contexts, but not in others (e.g. in Islam but not in Buddhism)?

Kari’s findings in particular validate the further study of new ways of understanding the motivations behind searching for information, stating that these “are

much more heterogeneous than presumed by the rationalistic ‘school of problem-solving’” (2001, p. 209-210), allowing for the influence of other fields such as psychology, philosophy or religious studies to suggest alternatives. Furthermore, Kari’s emphasis on studying the uses of information and the outcomes of engaging with information highlight an important, but often overlooked aspect of information behaviour as much of the focus of LIS research has been on information retrieval rather than on its use. More investigation is needed to examine more closely how information changes human beings. Finally, Kari’s research also validates the further study of new ways of understanding the nature of information not based on unexamined or ordinary modes of perception, but rather on religious or spiritual epistemologies.

2.4 ELIS STUDIES OF SO-CALLED ‘BEYOND’ EVERYDAY LIFE EXAMPLES

There exists an important subsection of ELIS studies which engage with the “deeply meaningful and profoundly personal” (Clemens & Cushing, 2010, p. 1) aspects of everyday life. Religious information behaviours could be said to occupy or be related to this subsection but have not directly been studied within existential or profound contexts that have been studied here. Clemens & Cushing in their 2010 studies of birthmothers giving their infants up for adoption, and the children of sperm donors, attempt to establish this subsection as a distinct type of information behaviour, coining it “beyond everyday life information seeking”. However, these are also best defined at present as ELIS studies because they feature unusual information phenomena and situations that many human beings may nevertheless have to grapple with at some point in their lifetime. Based on their participants’ responses, Clemens & Cushing

characterize 'beyond' everyday life information seeking as far from routine involving individuals traversing unfamiliar territory in their lives such as situations that they never perceived themselves going through as well as using unfamiliar information sources (2010, p. 7-9). Clemens & Cushing also report that "Several factors push this information seeking situation beyond the everyday, including stress, emotion, secrecy and shame surrounding the decision process" (p. 9). The effects of 'beyond' everyday life information seeking are notably different as well. Instead of perhaps mere learning, the individuals in Clemens' & Cushings' studies were "[forced] to incorporate their new understanding of themselves into existing information [about themselves]" (2010, p. 10) noting an existential effect of this information seeking.

Other studies of deeply meaningful and profoundly personal topics mostly involve the investigation of information needs of dying individuals. The earliest is a literature review on information behaviour and dying from a variety of fields, including health information science and LIS. The authors, Donat & Fisher (2002), conclude from their literature review that "little research has examined dying and death from an information perspective. The scant research that exists, however, suggests that information is critical at different stages and to many different actors involved in the process" (p. 184). Baker (2004) investigated information needs at the time of death through the content analysis of a non-fiction work *Conversations at Midnight: Coming to Terms with Dying and Death* (1993) which is a written conversation between a dying man and his wife who is a clinical social worker and grief counsellor. Baker describes a variety of practices in which spiritual information is involved: (1) finding answers within yourself; (2) gaining trust and confidence in pursuing your inner journey; (3) following a process

of deeper thought and curiosity; and (4) recognizing the preciousness of the experience of dying (Baker, 2004, p. 81). Additionally, Fourie (2008; 2012) addresses the information needs of patients in cancer palliative care. She (2008) notes that the existential context of her informants makes understanding the information behaviour of palliative cancer patients complex (“Selected Findings,” para. 1).

Finally, Ulland & DeMarinis (2014) engaged in a qualitative study of twelve professional therapists in Norway whose goal was to “explore how therapists’ backgrounds and existential information influence their therapeutic practice and philosophy of care, and the use of existential information in psychotherapy” (p. 582). Of particular benefit to LIS, Ulland & DeMarinis provide a working definition of existential information. They (2014) write, “Existential information includes both the searching and longing for meaning and significance in life – and the interpretations and answers given in religious, spiritual and other types of worldview expressions” (p. 586). This definition is aligned with previous understandings of existential gaps and life projects that have been alluded to elsewhere in this review.

2.4.1 GAPS AND LIMITATIONS OF ‘BEYOND’ EVERYDAY LIFE ELIS STUDIES

It is evident from the few studies that exist on the subject of the so-called ‘beyond’ everyday life information studies that far more research is needed in this area to illuminate the boundaries of ELIS or ‘beyond’ ELIS or whatever it may be. Is Clemens’ & Cushing’s (2010) distinction of information behaviours that are “deeply meaningful and profoundly personal” (p. 1) really a third facet of life experience? Is this distinction between ELIS and beyond ELIS real?

Furthermore, within the existential contexts that this research is situated, there is no discussion around the unique nature of these information needs. For instance, if inner peace is an information need, as Baker (2004) discovered from her study, what implications does this have for defining information and understanding information behaviours and practices? How are existential needs different from, or similar to, other information needs? Fourie (2008) highlights gaps in this area of study in particular mentioning the need for research into “Dormant information needs, unawareness of information needs and difficulty in expressing information needs” (“Discussion,” para. 1) which are also related to the examples of extensive life projects in Savolainen’s ELIS theories and life-long gaps in Sense-making (to be discussed in the next section). Also, she mentions a need for “Theories that may shed light on information behaviour in existential contexts” (“Discussion,” para. 1). It is a hope that this dissertation will be able to contribute to the discussion about this area of information practices.

2.5 STUDIES AND THEORIES OF EVERYDAY LIFE INFORMATION SEEKING (ELIS) AND THEIR POTENTIAL APPLICATION TO RELIGIOUS ELIS

ELIS theories provide useful frameworks for understanding religious everyday life information seeking. In this section, influential ELIS theories, in particular those of Elfreda Chatman, Reijo Savolainen and Brenda Dervin, will be described along with their potential application for understanding religious ELIS. Despite the growing number of ELIS studies, Savaolinen (2008) laments how “we lack qualitative research exploring how people make use of diverse information sources to further their everyday projects” (p. 7). This is especially true in regards to the pursuit of religious beliefs and practices, which are an important aspect of many people’s everyday lives. These

everyday life frameworks provide models in which religious everyday life information studies could be possibly be explored. The frameworks above are similar in many aspects, but they tend to differ in some aspects, notably in their focus on either mental elements or social elements of the theory over the other. It is important at this stage of the research to examine a variety of models so as to not exclude any explanatory capabilities of the different theories

2.5.1 CHATMAN'S SMALL WORLD / LIFE IN THE ROUND THEORY AND ITS APPLICATION TO RELIGIOUS ELIS

In 1999 Chatman studied the information worlds of incarcerated women. From this she developed a sociological theory of information seeking, a theory that outlines the movement of information within a "Life in the Round". Chatman (1999) defines this concept as a life "lived within an acceptable degree of approximation and imprecision. It is a life lived with a high tolerance for ambiguity. But it is also lived in a world in which most phenomena are taken for granted. Occurrences are viewed as reasonable and somewhat predictable. It is a world in which most events fit within the natural order of things" (p. 213).

Chatman notes that a small world begins with "a community of like-minded individuals who share coownership of social reality" (p. 213) and possessing the features listed above from her earlier work. Within the small world are individuals who perform a normative role, suggesting social norms for others to adopt. These norms are adopted by other members to provide "a collective sense of direction and order" (p. 213). As a result of the establishment of these social norms, a particular worldview

(values, meaning, symbols) is created and shared amongst the members of the small world within their immediate context.

Chatman proposes that this small world, its social norms and resulting worldview “works” for the majority of the time and thus members of the small world seek information only within it. Thus, she states, “life in the round will, for everyday purposes, have a negative effect on information seeking” (Chatman, 1999, p. 214) as individuals will not seek information beyond the confines of the small world unless it is extraordinary in some way, or “there is a collective expectation that the information is relevant” (Chatman, 1999, p. 213), or when life in the round is no longer functioning—an aspect of it (i.e. the small world, normative individuals, social norms, worldview change) has been disrupted in some manner.

Individuals within religious communities could be viewed as living life in the round. However, it is likely in this case that the worldview established by religious doctrines and philosophies are the lynchpin dictating the boundaries of the small world and providing social capital to certain individuals (such as religious leaders) to act as a normative force on the small world citizen’s behaviour as well as to dictate the social norms present within it. Information seeking behaviour may be limited to those sources that are aligned with accepted doctrines or beliefs, just as Porcella (1973) and Wicks (1999) found with clergy and the selection of their information sources. However, Chatman’s theories may be instrumental to understanding the social variables within communities of Buddhist practitioners that are at play when they are engaging with religious information.

2.5.2 SAVOLAINEN'S 'WAY OF LIFE / MASTERY OF LIFE' ELIS THEORY AND ITS APPLICATION TO RELIGIOUS ELIS

Savolainen's "Way of Life / Mastery of Life" ELIS theory "introduces a research framework in order to clarify some basic concepts of nonwork information seeking" (Savolainen, 1995, p. 260). This ELIS theory is informed by Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus. Habitus "is a socially and culturally determined system of thinking, perception, and evaluation, internalized by the individual" (Savolainen, 1995, p. 261-2). It is habitus that forms the base of *way of life* as our actions are shaped and influenced by our habitus (Savolainen, 1995, p. 262). Actively living out a way of life, individuals are led into a natural *order of things* consisting of "various activities taking place in the daily life world" (Savolainen, p. 262) such as one's job, engaging in household care, and voluntary activities such as leisure. Individuals make preferences or determine an order of preference given to these various activities in the lifeworld that are influenced by both subjective (e.g. likes and dislikes) and objective (e.g. beyond our immediate control, such as work hours) considerations. This leads to a preferred order of engaging in activities which leads to a conservatism of everyday life—a routine.

However, Savolainen (1995) notes, "Because the meaningful order of things might not reproduce itself automatically, individuals are required to take active care of it. *Mastery of life* is this caring activity" (p. 264, *emph. mine*). More importantly, "it implies the importance of coherence of the life project at large" (Savolainen, 1995, p. 264). It is this sense of coherence that is a general requirement for positive mastery of life.

Thus, coherence or mastery of life can be actively or passively pursued, again conditioned by one's habitus (p. 265). Savolainen (1995) explains that while it is "Passive when people are satisfied with seeing that everything goes on as expected...

Active mastery of life is associated with pragmatic problem solving in cases where the order of things has been shaken or threatened” (p. 264). Importantly, Savolainen notes that information seeking forms a part of an individual’s mastery of life as individuals may seek information to return to a sense of coherence.

Religious ELIS can be understood within this way of life / mastery of life framework as well. Religious beliefs and dominant social or cultural religious worldviews may contribute in a significant manner to an individual’s habitus, guiding individuals to engage with and evaluate their reality from a worldview of a particular faith’s understanding of the world. Or, an individual’s current (perhaps not-religious or differently-religious) habitus leads to an order of life that results in a frequent need to engage in mastery of life so an individual may begin to actively reformulate an existing habitus or find new techniques of mastery of life that are religious in nature. Also, freedom from existential angst, spiritual fulfillment, attaining a sense of ‘permanent’ happiness and personal completeness may be a deep-seated aspect of an individual’s life project which may motivate an individual to engage in mastery of life actions that lead to coherence or accomplishment of these wishes. Attempting to solve these fundamental problems by seeking information or instructions from religious texts or teachers could be considered an active form of mastery of life, as well as engaging with this religious information in some manner such as prayer, meditation, contemplation or reading.

2.5.3 SAVOLAINEN’S SOCIAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL EVERYDAY LIFE INFORMATION PRACTICES THEORY AND ITS APPLICATION TO RELIGIOUS ELIS

Savolainen's social phenomenological model of everyday life information practices seeks to establish explanations for "processes of information seeking and use [that] are constituted socially and dialogically, rather than based on the cognitive or mental models, needs, and motives of individual actors" (Savolainen, 2008, p. 4). Taking phenomenology as the basis of his theoretical model, Savolainen's ELIS theory relies upon the the concept of the *lifeworld*, or "that province of reality which the wide-awake and normal adult simply takes for granted in the attitude of common sense" (Savolainen, 2008, p. 26). The lifeworld is, in other words, the conscious subjective experiences of individuals. Similar to Bourdieu's habitus, Savolainen (2008) notes that the lifeworld is influenced by a "stock of knowledge" (p. 27) consisting of some personal experience, but largely comprised of social understandings passed down from, among others, teachers, parents, and institutions.

Practices are composed of more basic actions (doings and sayings). These actions are given meaning within the context of an individual's lifeworld. Savolainen (2008) writes, "Action is tied to an awareness of how it fulfills some future goal...action obtains its meaning from its goal" (p. 26). Projects, or goals, generally precede an action, but "projects do not occur by themselves but are chosen in situations that are perceived as problematic in some sense" (Savolainen, 2008, p. 27); in other words, projects or goals are given meaning by their "teleoaffective structure," their end-orientation combined with beliefs, hopes, expectations, emotions, moods and values that comprise affectivity (p. 28). Thus, "Practices are not valuable in themselves; they are given meaning as tools that are used to attain the values, goals, and interests attached to everyday projects" (Savolainen, 2008, p. 29-30). In summary, Savolainen

(2008) writes that “one’s life world consists of many different projects with varying temporal and spatial perspectives or horizons. Everyday information practices are constitutive of these projects and ultimately these projects give information practices their meaning” (p. 53).

Savolainen (2008) then goes on to describe “zones of the lifeworld” which are subjectively experienced (or potentially experienced), environments seemingly emanating from the embodied individual. These zones are: (1) the world within actual reach, which describes the embodied individual’s current position; (2) the world within potential reach, a zone beyond the immediate position of the individual, but relatively accessible; (3) relatively irrelevant, a zone with no immediate interest; and (4) absolutely irrelevant which describes a zone where the individual cannot influence things or processes in this area (p. 58). These zones affect information source horizons of the individual, i.e. the sources of information that are available to the individual.

Savolainen’s social phenomenological ELIS theory can also be used to describe religious information practices and behaviours. As Savolainen noted, practices are given meaning by their context within an individual’s lifeworld. Religious beliefs or existential issues may form a part of the teleoaffective structure from which meaning derives. Thus, information practices could be given religious meaning within a religious context such as the pursuit of everyday religious life projects. Savolainen’s (2008) mention of “different projects with varying temporal and spatial perspectives or horizons” (p. 53) suggests that there may be life projects that are literally life-long, including possibly expansive religious goals or spiritual attainments. Finally, Kari’s (2001) informants had reported that they used paranormal sources of information such as

paranormal beings, suggesting that the boundaries of the zones of the lifeworld are different for each individual. What one individual may consider absolutely irrelevant—the existence of a supernatural being for example—may be part of the zones of the ‘world within actual reach’ or the ‘world within potential reach’ for individuals who believe in or who have encountered such beings.

2.5.4 DERVIN’S SENSE-MAKING METATHEORY AND ITS APPLICATION TO RELIGIOUS ELIS

The basic goal of Sense-making is to understand how individuals negotiate living in an unpredictable world; in other words, Sense-making attempts to understand how individuals make sense of their reality, something which is a “‘constant’ of the human condition” (Dervin, 1991, p. 64). The essence of Sense-making is the ‘Sense-making Triangle’ which is comprised of three components: Situation-Gap-Use. An individual begins his or her journey through the Sense-making triangle enacting, according to Dervin, the human mandate “to move through time and space” (Dervin, 1983, p. 7) and “to make sense without complete instruction in a reality, which is itself in flux and requires continued sense-making” (Dervin, 1999a, p. 332) by “construct[ing] interpretive bridges over a gappy reality” (Dervin, 1999b, p. 730). ‘Situation’ in the Triangle is understood as human beings enacting the human mandate without incident. Dervin’s ‘situations’ are also understood to stand for the unique context of each individual Sense-maker (i.e. their time and place), but also considers the cultural, historical, and sociological elements that contribute to the construction of an individual. Therefore, each progression through the Sense-making Triangle is unique as each individual human has unique contexts and life experiences.

At some point because reality is 'gappy', an individual will encounter a gap and will be forced to cease their movement forward as per the mandate. Examples of gaps include: a misunderstanding, a negative emotion or feeling or a lack of knowledge. A gap is experienced anytime when the sense an individual was utilizing fails to provide a satisfactory account for new experiences and thus the "individual's internal sense has 'run out'" (Dervin & Nilan, 1986, p. 21). Old sense needs to have run out first; there needs to be "a missing piece in a picture of a situation" (Dervin, 1980, p. 44). Thus, to satisfactorily create new sense, the gap must be bridged.

The bridging of the gap is where Dervin's focus on "verbings" enters. The focus of the bridging of the gap is on the *hows* of people's sense makings rather than the *whats* of people's sense making. As such, scholars have listed a multiplicity of ways that human beings bridge the gaps. These verbings include for instance: got information, got help, got directions, went down a new path, decided to start over, or "observings, thinkings, idea creatings, comparings, contrastings, rejectings, talkings, sendings, agreeings, disagreeings" (Dervin, 1991, p. 64). Once the gap has been bridged, sense has been remade and the individual continues to move through time and space until sense is unmade again. Sometimes, making-sense can lead to further sense-making or perhaps even sense-unmaking.

Sense-making, like the ELIS theories mentioned above, can be used to describe religious ELIS. Some gaps lead to discrete information seeking tasks such as finding out the location of a retail store or searching a government's website to find tax information. However, a gap may also lead to an opportunity for individuals to learn to behave in a different manner or to feel differently about a particular issue related to the

gap, indicating a need for a feeling or sensation rather than a piece of discrete information. In terms of understanding the goal of religious thought and practice as sense making, I suggest that human beings are constantly faced with larger and more profound gaps than those aforementioned and that our making sense or making meaning of reality also involves the negotiation of existential gaps that must be bridged from the moment that human beings are born. These gaps may be the largest in a human being's life, perhaps taking a whole lifetime (or lifetimes) to bridge.

These gaps could be characterized by a human being's confrontation with his or her most profound existential issues: the purpose and meaning of life, death and afterlife, metaphysical questions, the problem of good and evil, and notions of identity. Dervin (2003/1999) defines 'information' as "sense made" (p.150), so in order to complete the information-seeking task and reduce anxiety, sense has to be made in some manner, perhaps by ignoring the gap, but perhaps by turning to religion as a way to help make sense of these existential concerns. Godbold (2006) suggests however that

Individuals may not search for information if they perceive that the gap is too big....Other situations in which the gap will appear too big are when the person feels they do not have time or cannot see how to proceed. They may not be able to see how to search usefully, they may not understand the problem enough or they may be unable to imagine the possibility of a solution. (p. 6)

This is very likely true for many individuals who have no idea where to look for help with their existential concerns. Godbold's further comments suggest that these existential concerns are too great for individuals to ever bridge in one life time, and yet humans will continue to do so because they are driven by their mandates. Godbold writes again,

Having first read Dervin's ideas some months after the unexpected death of my mother, I was immediately struck by the problem of an individual having a gap

with no means to span it. Furthermore, that gap of mine remains: I still feel a need for information about death in general and about my mother's death in particular, information that I believe I will never obtain. It is plain that in some sense, some gaps may never go away. Yet life goes on and I am not still shivering by the gap. Instead, there seems to be a human ability to juggle many gaps simultaneously. Some problems may be left to one side for a time while the individual focuses on other issues.” (p. 7-8)

Savolainen (2006) concurs with this in that he says bridges may be constructed in phases and only partially crossed (p. 1121).

Individuals can bridge these existential gaps by using religious information such as holy texts or oral teachings to bridge the gap by engaging in the practical advice that the holy text or oral teaching has to offer. If the advice succeeds, then the gap could be bridged. Individuals could also seek affective bridgings to their existential gaps by praying, requesting blessings, or engaging in contemplation.

In conclusion, the existing literature of religious work-related and everyday life information behaviour studies provides a foundation for the study of the information behaviour of Kadampa Buddhists. Additionally, this literature also presents gaps and opportunities for this project to explore.

3.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1 What are the everyday life information practices of Buddhists?

This first research question seeks to answer, in a descriptive manner, the information practices of Buddhists that cover the whole information ‘journey’ from information needs and motivations, to seeking and use. In particular, I want to explore in greater detail the information practices that are not already part of the normal “repertoire” of information practices that are revealed through this new context.

Potentially, I hope to expand LIS's notions of what is considered information or information practices when they are looked at from this more profound context. This research question is meant to continue the tradition of the studies already established within the study of religious information behaviours.

3.2 Do existential questions or concerns drive New Kadampa Buddhists to seek Dharma information?

This and the following two research question take areas of everyday life religious information practices and teases out certain aspects of information behaviour which might potentially reveal differences in the way that LIS normally conceptualizes information needs and information use. This question in particular explores whether existing ELIS theories are adequate to explain motivations for engaging in religious information practices.

3.3 Is a Dharma realization an outcome of the use of Dharma information?

This research question seeks to study in more detail information use and its effects within a Buddhist context. How are Buddhists using religious information and what effects are they experiencing from engaging in Dharma practice? Does, and if so, how does information result in the soteriological goal of Buddhism? Do existing ELIS theories adequately explain the information use of New Kadampa Buddhists? Is there any evidence of a new explanation?

3.4 Are religious information practices best understood and conceptualized as a part of everyday life information practices?

This research question seeks to challenge the boundaries of ELIS as a consequence of bringing it into a religious context. In what ways do religious information practices not fit into existing ELIS theories due to the profundity of religious practices as well as their potential lifelong duration?

4.0 METHODOLOGY

4.1 PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS

This study will be conducted within a naturalistic framework. Naturalistic inquiry is a paradigm of inquiry that is frequently used in the social sciences as it is more appropriate than rationalistic or scientific frameworks for the study of people within their contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1982). The naturalistic paradigm, or way of looking at and studying the world, is comprised of a set of axioms concerning the nature of reality, the relationship between the inquirer and the respondent and the nature of the truth statements within this paradigm. Within the naturalistic paradigm, the nature of reality is not universal, absolute and independent as it is in a rationalistic paradigm, but is rather “multiple, divergent, [and] holistic” (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 237). It is multiple because each respondent has a unique interpretation or way of looking at the world based on individual experiences and thus respondents are potentially divergent from each other. These realities are also holistic because they must be studied as a whole as “to disassociate the wholes is to alter them radically” (Lincoln & Guba, 1982, p. 237).

Unlike the rationalistic paradigm which purports to place the inquirer at a distance from his or her object of study, the inquirer/respondent relationship within the naturalistic paradigm is one of interdependence as “the inquirer and the object interact to influence one another” (Lincoln & Guba, 1982, p. 238). As such, the researcher and his or her experiences are an important aspect of this type of inquiry (more on this below). Finally, given that it is impossible to separate the context from the object of study within the naturalistic paradigm, truth statements are “idiographic, context-bound working hypotheses [that] focus on differences” (Lincoln & Guba, 1982, p. 237) and thus are not meant to be generalized nomothetic truth statements as they are in a rationalistic paradigm. An aim is for the potential transferability of naturalistic findings to similar contexts rather than the generalization of a sample to the whole population. In short, a goal that stems from these axioms is the establishment of intersubjectivity, which is “the process by which humans share common experiences and subscribe to shared understandings of reality” (Armstrong, 2010, p. 883) as a means of seeking knowledge and truth.

In a general sense the naturalistic paradigm is commensurate with Buddhist metaphysics. While I am not planning to explicitly conduct my research within a Buddhist paradigm, Buddhist metaphysics does inform my own way of looking at the world which is relevant to the conception of researcher as research instrument. Furthermore, this paradigm may also be shared by the informants of my study. In particular, the naturalistic paradigm is similar to the teachings of the Madhyamaka-Prasangika school founded by Nagarjuna (c. 150-250 CE) and his later disciple Chandrakirti (c. 600-650 CE). Madhyamikas teach that phenomena lack inherent or

absolute existence from their own side, by their own power, or from a permanent, unchanging essence. Rather, phenomena are dependently related in that they rely upon their parts, their causes, their name, their basis of imputation and their imputation by conception; no phenomena can be found existing independent of these. The implications of this is that each individual experiences a unique reality because every individual has a mind (cf. multiple realities of naturalistic inquiry). Furthermore, other individuals that appear to the mind are dependently related to the mind perceiving them (cf. interdependent inquirer/respondent relationship). Truths within this paradigm are also context driven as they can be whatever is appropriate to the situation of the individual as a convention (cf. idiographic truths).

4.1.1 RESEARCHER AS RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Armstrong (2010) writes that “naturalistic inquiry relies upon the researcher’s own subjective experiences in conjunction with other data and evidence as a necessary component of creating interpretations of world” (p. 880). Thus, I recognize and fully support my role as an active instrument of research. I also recognize the power of my own individual interpretation of reality in the creation of knowledge within the naturalistic paradigm, a paradigm which Guba & Lincoln (1982) note, that “[takes] advantage of the not inconsiderable power of the human-as-instrument” (p. 235). Demonstrating the interpretive power of the individual, Corbin & Strauss (2008) instruct the researcher to rely upon a sense of “feeling right” when the findings of the research accurately reflect the essence of the phenomena studied (p. 47). Furthermore, Guba & Lincoln (1988, p. 94) suggest minimizing the “distance or objective separateness between himself or

herself and those being researched” (in Creswell, 2013, p. 20), rather than increasing it as the suggestion would be within a rationalistic paradigm. Therefore, my pre-existing epistemological assumptions for this project concern my status as an insider within the community of my informants, the New Kadampa Tradition. I possess, according to Merton (2006), “a priori intimate knowledge of the community and its members” (in Roland & Wicks, 2009, p. 253) through my active involvement with the NKT over several years.

While some may consider this insider status as problematic because it leads to problems of over-rapport with informants or an inability to bracket out the researcher’s assumptions and experiences of the phenomena, I believe that the notion of “validity requires intimacy” (Palys & Atchison, 2008, p. 10) outweighs these problems. However, a degree of self-reflexivity is required of the researcher to be constantly examining these beliefs and assumptions at every stage of the research process (Hellowell, 2006). Roland and Wicks (2009) suggest conducting an exit survey soon after interviews are completed to evaluate the “recognized value of the insider status of the researcher” (p. 254) by the interviewee. In lieu of an exit survey, I plan to ask a final question in each interview in regards to my insider status and whether it helped or hindered my informants’ ability to describe their experiences. Additionally I plan on keeping a reflective journal (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) throughout the study to track and monitor my influences upon the results.

Finally, while not explicitly conducted as such, I view this project as possessing the spirit of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990) which investigates personal, but universal or social issues through the lens of personal transformation of the researcher.

I try to undertake this research with the intention of it being a personal spiritual practice, as a method to deepen my understanding and experience of the Dharma and its practice and as an opportunity to benefit others.

4.2 METHODOLOGICAL STANDPOINT

My research questions cover a wide range of phenomena as information needs, seeking, resources and use are different phenomena. The thesis looks at the whole information journey of a Buddhist, from an initial state of need and desire, through the process of finding information, to putting that information to practice in a comprehensive manner. I therefore need to employ two research methods to more accurately capture these practices and experiences of my informants.

The overarching methodological approach to my project is one that is guided by grounded theory which is “a qualitative research design in which the inquirer generates a general explanation (a theory) of a process, an action, or an interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants” (Creswell, 2013, p. 83). The goal of this project is not necessarily to develop a complete model or theory of Buddhist or religious information seeking. Despite the grounded theory approach, it is largely exploratory and descriptive by nature. However, I believe that the project will be beneficial in generating smaller parts or cogs in a more complete theory as well as potentially contributing to other theories of information need, seeking or use. In particular, grounded theory’s approach to data collection and analysis is useful for collecting a wide range of qualitative data in order to better understand these phenomena and their potential interactions better. Corbin & Strauss (1990) write that “data for a grounded

theory can come from various sources...anything that may shed light on questions under study” (p. 5). In my project, I will be employing a multi-method approach by collecting textual data through a qualitative content analysis and experiential or phenomenological data through interviews to explore the informational nature of Dharma practice. Collectively, these methods will allow me to explore a wider variety of religious information phenomena within this population. I will complete a qualitative content analysis of Buddhist religious texts that are employed by New Kadampa Buddhists. The religious texts that I plan to study (outlined below) describe or outline the “ideal” information behaviours of New Kadampa Buddhists as they derive from a spiritual and cognitive authority of the population under study. The type of data that cannot be gathered from a content analysis, such as motivations, lived experiences and interpretations are needed to round out an investigation of Buddhist information practices. Semi-structured interviews will be used primarily to gain access to these insights. In qualitative studies, the credibility and validity of the study is enhanced through triangulation of, amongst other things, data, theoretical perspectives, and methodologies (Denzin, 1978 as cited in Konecki, 2008, p. 15). It is hoped therefore that a multi-method approach will aid in increasing these desired qualities. In particular, the qualitative content analysis and the interviews will function together to: (1) provide multiple data sources from which to draw upon a larger range of possible information behaviours and practices that can be accounted for in the study; (2) provide more fodder for analysis (“more pieces for the puzzle”); (3) aid each other as providing a basis for the analysis; and finally (4) provide a basis for comparison between ideal

information behaviours and practices outlined in the text and actual enacted behaviours derived from the interviews.

At first, I struggled with the phenomenological nature of a large part of my research and whether I should be following other procedures and methodological frameworks for my project. However, I came across a quotation from Corbin which allowed me to understand the real nature of grounded theory. She (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) writes:

When I talk about a soldier's experience, I'm *not* talking about 'inner experience' or experience from a phenomenological point of view, rather I am using experience as a general all-encompassing term to describe the entire process of being a frontline soldier or pilot in the Vietnam War, from volunteering for service, to be drafted, and to homecoming. (p. 162)

Similarly, while I am also collecting data on phenomenological experience, I feel that grounded theory is a better fit for a methodological framework because I am looking beyond the mere phenomenological experience that may arise from practicing Dharma to incorporate factors around and beyond it such as physical practices with religious objects or the social interaction that is involved in practicing Dharma as part of a community of religious practitioners.

4.3 QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS (QCA)

The qualitative content analysis will be conducted largely following instructions and advice from Krippendorf (2013).

4.3.1 QCA SAMPLE

The text that I have chosen as a sample for the qualitative content analysis is *Joyful Path of Good Fortune* (Tharpa Publications, 1995) written by Geshe Kelsang

Gyatso. The text is a comprehensive work of the Buddhist path to Enlightenment, outlining all of the stages of the path. The work is subtitled: “the complete Buddhist path to Enlightenment”. Gyatso’s works are also appropriate to study because he is the founder and former Spiritual Director of the New Kadampa Tradition; many of his disciples consider him to be their Spiritual Guide or Guru.

4.3.2 QCA UNITS OF ANALYSIS

The unit of analysis of the content analysis component of the study is an instance of a perceived information behaviour or practice by the researcher present in the text. Krippendorf (2013) calls these units of analysis “thematic distinctions” (p. 108) and describes them as units that use the meaning of the content rather than surface features such as presence of the word or syntax as the basis for analysis. Since, within the Buddhist community, religious information practices are not expressly understood as such, the limits of such units rely upon the researcher. To aid in this delimitation, Savolainen (2008) defines an information practice as “a set of socially and culturally established ways to identify, seek, use, and share the information available in various sources” (p. 2). It could be easily argued that Buddhist information practices, while not always applicable to larger social or cultural contexts, are valid for communities of Buddhists. Gyatso, as a sort of cognitive authority within the NKT, outlines ‘ideal’ Buddhist information practices that disciples should take up themselves. In particular I am going to be searching for instances of any sort of interaction with, or use of, documents or instructions (understood as information) within this set of texts. In this study, I have interpreted the concept of *Dharma*, the Buddha’s teachings, to be information broadly construed. While again I will be relying upon my intuition to help me

determine an information practice based on Savolainen's description, my strategy is that the presence of words such as Dharma, teaching, instructions or texts will help me hone in on these information practices. Since the unit of analysis is defined by the theme or content of the particular instance of an information practice, these instances may be of varying lengths from a sentence fragment to a paragraph and may contain more than one instance of an information practice. However, since the goal of this study is not merely to create a quantified list of occurrences of these information practices, but rather to explore how these information practices are used "in real life," the presence of more than one information practice interacting with another is more helpful in determining their relationship to one another.

4.3.3 QCA PROCEDURE

I have already procured a copy of the text that will be subjected to analysis. I will read the text from front to back. The analyzable text is the whole work except for front matters such as title pages or publication information. Forewords, introductions or acknowledgements will be included as they might contain mentions of information practices. Similarly, indexes or any other end matters (e.g. colophons, advertisements) will not be included as part of the analyzable text. However, any information practices present in any appendices or glossaries would be.

Any instances of information practices will be copied by retyping them into a word processing document dedicated for each work. Also at this time, any initial notes concerning analysis may be made. These notes will be in a different font, colour or style

to distinguish them from the copied text. The word processing documents will be saved on my personal computer's hard drive as well as on a backup thumb drive.

4.3.4 QCA CODING

Generally informing my initial coding will be Savolainen's (2008) definition of information practices mentioned above: "ways to identify, seek, use, and share the information available in various sources" (p. 2) as I will be searching for instances where information identification, seeking, use and sharing are mentioned within the text. In addition to these, I will be also searching for instances of information behaviours that are not confined to this initial coding scheme. I will employ a constant comparison method to "establish boundaries of the categories, find negative evidence, discern conceptual similarities and [seeks] to discover patterns" (Tesch, 1990, p. 96) of the examples derived from the initial coding as well as new themes and categories until a complete coding scheme is derived.

Once the first "round" of coding is completed and every instance of an information practice is assigned to at least one category, then the instances of the information behaviours will be grouped together in new word processing documents, rather than separately so that they can be compared to each other and make any further changes or clarifications that may be needed. Otherwise stated, "As this process continues, labels for codes emerge that are reflective of more than one key thought" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1279).

4.3.5 QCA ANALYSIS

Analysis of the results of the qualitative content analysis will involve creating a formal list or model of the information practices of New Kadampa Buddhists. Then, comparisons of the Buddhist information practices will be made with the behaviours and practices found in the reviewed literature on religious information behaviours as well as other prominent information behaviour and practice models such as Dervin's above. The analysis will then outline where the Buddhist information practices reveal new practices, and how the Buddhist information practices may differ from existing conceptualizations of these practices. Making this comparison is necessary to reveal where the new findings are and where there are new points for consideration and discussion.

A small pilot study employing this methodological procedure and analytical technique was conducted in March 2015, albeit with the transcription of an oral Dharma teaching rather than a published text.

4.4 INTERVIEWS

The second method that I will be using to collect data will be semi-structured interviews. Interviews are a common qualitative research method to garner information directly from individuals about their thoughts and personal experiences. Luo & Wildemuth (2009) report that "researchers often choose semistructured interviews because they are aware that individuals understand the world in varying ways" (p. 233). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to be more flexible than structured interviews in directing his or her inquiry in response to each informant's unique

perspective and experiences and to the pace and tone of the interview conversation.

4.4.1 INTERVIEW SAMPLE INCLUSION CRITERIA, SAMPLING TECHNIQUES AND SAMPLE SIZE

The people that I wish to study are adult Buddhists who are at least eighteen years old and who self-identify as members of the NKT. I will be relying upon self-identification by the informant because there is no formal process of conversion or “official” way to demonstrate membership within this tradition. Usually one considers oneself a Buddhist when one continuously goes for refuge to the Three Jewels—Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha—but this is an internal action and not easily identified externally. Practitioners may be lay or ordained members of the tradition. The NKT has over 1000 centres and meditation groups spanning the globe. However, I will be restricting my sample to include informants only from the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada as these countries are generally culturally analogous, sharing a common history and language. Also, this geographical restriction will aid in recruiting only Western practitioners of Buddhism. The NKT is comprised almost entirely of convert Buddhists who were raised in other religious traditions or no religious tradition. Although the NKT has centres in Asia (e.g. Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan), these Asian practitioners are more likely to have been raised within a Buddhist context rather than have converted later in life.

I will be relying upon a convenience sample of this population interviewing those who profess interest in participating in my study in person or by replying to my call for participants and letter of information. However, if I find that my convenience sample has become too homogenous in some way or another (e.g., all beginners, all females, all lay

practitioners, etc.), I will engage in theoretical sampling (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In theoretical sampling “the process of data collection [is] directed by evolving theory rather than by predetermined population dimensions” (Druacker, Martsolk, Ross, & Rusk, 2007, p. 1137). The sample can be manipulated by the researcher in order to allow for a more heterogeneous composition of the sample, and especially in order that “the major categories [of the analysis] show depth and variation in terms of their development” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 149) that is achieved by having a more heterogeneous sample. This theoretical sampling will be conducted through the same avenues of recruitment (outlined below), but with a special request for those fulfilling the desired new attributes that may shed light on potentially missing elements of the data as it is being analyzed (hitherto unknown). Participants must also have a certain degree of fluency in English in order to fully participate in the interview.

Interviews will be conducted (and the data derived from them subsequently analyzed) until saturation is reached. Saturation occurs “when the collection of new data does not shed any further light on the issue under investigation” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967 in Mason, 2010). While it is difficult to predict with great certainty when this point will be reached, I anticipate that my sample size will be between 18 and 20 individuals. This sample size generally accords with the guidance of other scholars such as Bertaux (1981), who notes that fifteen is the smallest acceptable sample, Creswell (1998), who suggests a sample size of 20 to 30, and Green & Thorogood (2009) who relate that “little that is new comes out of transcripts after you have interviewed 20 or so people” (as cited in Mason, 2010). While I anticipate reaching saturation before this, I will have to limit the maximum number of interviews that I can conduct to thirty

individuals due to practical implications of analyzing such a quantity of data and so that the project is completed in a timely manner. If such an event occurs, I will acknowledge the related limitation of the study in reporting my findings.

4.4.1.1 INTERVIEW SAMPLE JUSTIFICATION

The justification for the use of the NKT as the population for my sample is primarily based upon convenience. Being a member of the NKT community, I have relatively easy access to my informants both in person and in online communities. That being said, the choice of the NKT for my sample is also based on the tradition's prevalence amongst Western Buddhist communities. The NKT is not a small sect of Western Buddhism. As I mentioned previously, the NKT is comprised of over 1200 centres and groups worldwide. While the exact numbers of adherents worldwide are unavailable, in Britain where the NKT was founded, Bluck (2006) notes that the NKT "has expanded more rapidly than any other Buddhist tradition" (p. 129) and has an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 members in Britain (p. 16) representing fifteen to twenty percent of all British Buddhists (p. 14). Additionally, Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, the founder of the NKT, is a noteworthy figure of Western Buddhism and is a prolific writer, being an author of over twenty works on meditation and Buddhism.

4.4.1.2 SAMPLE RECRUITMENT

I will be relying upon existing networks and resources within the Kadampa community for recruiting participants. I will be primarily recruiting my participants electronically. Using the 2014 (latest) edition of the *Directory of Kadampa Buddhist*

Centres and Branches, I plan to send my information letter electronically to the email address contacts for Kadampa centres in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom, listed in the *Directory* and ask if they would be kind enough to forward my letter on to their members through their own mailing lists. Interested people would contact me via email or phone to express their interest and set up a time and date for data collection.

I will also be posting my call for participants and the text of my information letter as a post within the following several large Facebook groups that comprise the Kadampa online communities, requesting informants for the study: “Students and Followers of Geshe Kelsang Gyatso,” “Kadampa Perfection of Giving” and “New Kadampa Tradition”. Students and Followers of Geshe Kelsang Gyatso is a public Facebook group. It is an informal group not directly affiliated with the NKT. While my request will not exactly fit the definition of the proscribed activity in the group which “is to discuss the meaning of Geshe Kelsang's teachings and how we can practice them in our modern daily life”, there has been at least one other occasion where a researcher has asked for participants in a project via this method. Kadampa Perfection of Giving and New Kadampa Tradition are both closed Facebook groups of which I am a member. They are also informal groups not established by the tradition but by practitioners. The “New Kadampa Tradition” group is “an informal discussion group mostly based upon our experiences with Kadam² Dharma” with which the nature of the research project is related to as it is attempting to collect experiences of practicing Kadam Dharma.

² “Kadam” is often used as an adjective to describe the tradition of Buddhism that is built upon from Atisha’s Lamrim instructions. The suffix “-pa” actually denotes a person, as in a person who practices Kadam Dharma.

Furthermore, members of the group “Kadampa Perfection of Giving” would have the opportunity to practice giving their time and information to my project. Practicing giving is the intention behind the creation of this group.

I would also post periodically (once a month during data collection) to my own Facebook timeline to see if those Kadampa practitioners who are my personal friends on Facebook would like to participate in the study or ‘share’ my status to recruit other participants via snowball sampling. I would also ask all informants at the completion of their interviews if they would pass on my contact information to any other interested individuals who are Kadampa practitioners. Finally, if during the course of an in-person, informal discussion of my research project with Kadampa practitioners they express interest in participating in the study, I would provide them with a letter of information and schedule an interview with them.

4.4.2 INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

When possible, the interviews will be conducted face-to-face. I would be willing to travel within the province of Ontario to interview if there happens to be a few interested people in each of those cities (there are Kadampa centres in Toronto, Mississauga, Ottawa, Hamilton, and Kingston). However, since I am relying upon a convenience sample from interested parties all over North America and the United Kingdom, I am also expecting that I will largely have to conduct interviews via Skype, Facetime or telephone. These interviews do not differ that much from face-to-face interviews, although I will take extra precautions to be located in an environment with a strong Internet connection to avoid the Skype or Facetime call being frequently

dropped. A benefit of performing the interviews over Skype is that the program allows an extra degree of anonymity if my informants wish since the video camera can be turned off with only the audio component used.

I expect that interviews will last sixty to ninety minutes. I do not want the interviews to extend beyond ninety minutes for the sake of tiring out or overtaxing the participant. The interviews will be digitally recorded using a hand held digital recorder. The audio files containing the interviews will be saved to the personal computer of the researcher for safe keeping and will be permanently deleted after five years (in 2021) according to Western University policy. Any identifying details that myself or the informant may use in the interview will be anonymized during the transcription of the interview. Anonymized transcripts will be kept by the research for further research and teaching purposes.

Fontana & Frey (2000, pp.654-56) propose these steps as fundamental to a successful interview that I have considered:

- *Accessing the setting and Understanding the language and culture of respondents.*

In regards to these steps, my insider status gives me relatively easy access to these informants. I am familiar with Buddhist religious terminology that they may use as well as the 'vocabulary' and idioms commonly used in Kadampa Dharma centres, as well as social expectations of etiquette and the like.

- *Deciding how to present oneself.* This is important because "once the interviewer's presentational self is 'cast', it leaves a profound impression on the respondents and has great influence over the success (or lack of it) of the study" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 655). I primarily want to present myself as a Kadampa practitioner who

happens to be engaging in a academic study. I believe that this approach will make my informants comfortable with discussing potentially personal matters.

- *Gaining Trust and Establishing rapport.* Again, I believe my insider status will help me in both these endeavours. I plan on being genuine in my department with my informants. I will not deceive my informants in any way. I have planned several warm up questions near the beginning that are not related to the study for establishing rapport. Acting off the assumption that the informant will be more at ease with myself and more familiar with the interview process as a whole closer to the end of the interview, I have placed the more 'sensitive' questions closer to the end of the interview and that he or she will feel comfortable enough to answer them by that time. Kadampa practitioners often discuss their practice with other practitioners and stories of how one has 'met the Dharma' are often told as a sort of 'ice breaking' story. I feel like my interview questions do not stray too far from conversations that practitioners would already be having.

4.4.2.1 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following is a list of questions that I plan to ask my informants. These questions will primarily involve generating responses to the 'hidden' aspects of information practices—motivations and use. In particular, I plan to ask for 'critical incidents' where appropriate so that my informants' data are rooted in experience rather than their potential re-conceptualizations of those experiences. Luo & Wildemuth (2009) note that in particular that "using this technique can be particularly useful for gathering data about information behaviours" (p. 235).

Establishing Rapport

- Inquire how informant is doing.
- Plans for the weekend?
- How are things going at your centre?
- What do you have coming up at your centre?
- How long have you been practicing?

Daily Dharma Practice

- Describe your typical day and how you practice Dharma within it
- What formal practices do you do? Why?
- When do you find you're most successful at 'off-the-cushion' meditation? Not?
- What sources do you use for your practice of Dharma?
- Are there any incidents that you can share with me when you really needed Dharma?
- What problems do you encounter in your Dharma practice?
- Describe contemplation, how do you know when you have your meditation object?
- What are you reading right now? Why?

Dharma as Social Practice

- Do you ever look to other people for help in your practice? When?
- How are other people involved in your Dharma practice?
- When do you like to share Dharma?
- Describe the nature of the relationship with your Guru.

Motivations for Dharma Practice

- Why do you practice Dharma?
- Why did you come to the practice?
- Why do you continue to stay with the practice?
- Has your motivation or desire to practice Dharma changed?
- What are you seeking to change (about yourself?)
- How do you choose which Dharma instructions to go to?
- Why do you choose to go to Dharma over other things to solve your problems? Why not?
- When do you find you need Dharma the most?
- Do you ever feel like you don't need it? When?
- Are you concerned about death, a sense of meaninglessness, uncertainty?

Effects of Dharma Practice

- How has the Dharma changed you?
- What about your experience has it changed?
- What do you notice about your world that is changed?
- Do you feel that you are different because of your practice? How?
- How are you different now?
- How is your mind different now?
- Do you interpret the world differently now that you practice Dharma? What do you attribute that to?
- Did you find what you're looking for?

Dharma, Information and Wisdom / Other

- Is there anything else that you would like to add?
- Do you consider the Dharma to be information?
- If not, what do you think it is?
- Is the written text information, the oral words?
- Do you consider Dharma realizations to be information?
- How does it compare to more mundane types of information, like a recipe?
- What is wisdom?
- How do you know when you have wisdom?
- Did you feel that my being a Kadampa practitioner helped or hindered this interview?

The last section of interview questions have been placed at the end as a sort of wrap-up to the interview, which may or may not be asked except for the question concerning my being a Kadampa practitioner and its effect on the interview. As for the other questions in the last section, I suspect that some informants will indirectly answer some of these questions during the earlier parts of the interview. I include them here out of curiosity to their responses.

4.4.4 INTERVIEWS CODING AND ANALYSIS

Coding and analysis for each interview will begin shortly after each interview is completed (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 163) so that my memories and personal observations of the interview remain fresh and clear and so that any reflections can be recorded. Corbin & Strauss (1990) also note that data collection and analysis of that data are interrelated as each interview should guide the inquiry during the next data collecting session (p. 6). So, my intention is to complete coding and analysis of the data as quickly as possible after each interview.

First, each transcript will be read from beginning to end to get a sense of the whole experience of the informant or “to enter vicariously into the life of

participants” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 163). A better understanding of the whole experience is necessary to understanding its component parts. The next step will be to break down the interview transcript into manageable pieces following natural breaks in the interview conversation, or clearly discernible theme changes, or paragraph/page breaks.

Then, each component part of the interview transcript will be read repeatedly and concepts that the data are indicating will be noted. Corbin & Strauss (2008) suggest that this process involves brainstorming, making comparisons, reflecting on the data, and trying to understand its relations to other broader topics (p. 193) or topics generated from other interviews and the qualitative content analysis which by this time the interviews are conducted, should be underway. The generation of these concepts and their related notes are primarily done in “memos” which are essentially just notes made by the researcher on the component of the interview transcript or of the phenomena under study. Once all of the component parts have been analyzed, the last stage of the analysis will be to begin looking for clues as to how these concepts and categories that were brought to light in previous stages of the analysis are integrated together by rereading memos and notes, creating a story line of the different components or categories, making diagrams, and generally just thinking about it (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 274). This last stage of the analysis will obviously include findings from other interviews as more of them are completed. The interview transcripts will be forwarded to the individual participants soon after they are transcribed so that they may be checked for any missing details or any further clarifications may be provided.

4.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As the primary informants for this study will be human individuals, there are ethical considerations to take into account to minimize and eliminate any harm they may come to them. Upon the acceptance of this proposal, a proposal outlining the ethical recruitment and treatment of my informants will be submitted to Western's Non-Medical Research Ethics Board for review. Recruitment of informants and collection of data will only commence once the proposal has satisfactorily passed the ethics review process.

With regards to recruitment, informants will contact me via telephone or email about their voluntary wish to participate in the study. An information letter will be created and distributed to the informants about the nature and goals of the study, a reminder about their voluntary participation in the study as well as my contact information should they have any needs or concerns regarding the study or their participation in it. Before any interviews are conducted, consent will be obtained from the informants either in written form whenever possible or where applicable, verbally from informants (as they may be geographically very distant and thus unable to give written consent).

While it is my goal to ensure my informants are relaxed, calm and comfortable during the interviews, some of the interview questions are of a deeply personal and existential nature which might invoke some emotional distress or anxiety. Informants will be instructed upon commencing the interview and reminded throughout that they are free to not answer any questions that they do not feel comfortable answering, that they may take a small reprieve from answering questions at any time and that they have

the freedom to end the interview at any time if they so wish without any negative consequence.

Every effort will be made to ensure the anonymity of the informants throughout the research project. Personal names or names of local places or spaces will be changed to a pseudonym during transcription of the interviews. Where applicable, personal identifiers will be collected with the lowest level of identifiability using ranges or broader categories. To ensure confidentiality of the data collected, the digital audio recorder, when not in use, will remain in a locked cabinet. The interviews will be transcribed by myself alone. The digital audio files as well as the word processing documents containing the transcripts of the interviews will be stored on my password protected personal computer. Furthermore, the transcripts themselves will be password protected. The digital audio files will be deleted upon completion of the thesis project.

5.0 PROPOSED CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter 4: Results (largely descriptive)

Chapter 5: Discussion I (critiquing current ELIS models in light of results)

Chapter 6: Discussion II (possible new theoretical approaches?)

Chapter 7: Conclusion

5.1 TIMELINE TO PROJECT COMPLETION

Date	Action
By end of fall semester, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed revised draft of proposal to committee • Approval of proposal before winter break
Winter semester, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin data collection for QCA • Begin coding of QCA • Begin ethics procedure
Summer semester, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics approval before May • Begin interviews • Begin coding of interviews • Begin analysis of interviews
Late Summer / Early Fall semester, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have interviews completed • Have QCA analysis completed
By end of Fall semester, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish transcription of interviews • Have interview analysis finished
January, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin drafts of dissertation
March, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft of Chapter 4 to committee
April, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft of Chapter 5 to committee
June, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft of Chapter 6 to committee
July, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft of Chapters 1, 2, 3, & 7 to committee
late August, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final draft of complete dissertation to committee
December, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public talk and defense

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