

Cultivating Concord through Inter-Viewing: A New Method for Inter-Lineage Contact

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1 Introduction

Drawing from central Buddhist teachings, this paper presents a new methodology for enhancing unity among distinct Buddhist lineages. Rather than advocating for a fusion of Buddhist schools into one amalgam, our aim is to facilitate harmonious interaction between practitioners of disparate lineages to foster mutual understanding that enables the identification of areas common across their respective philosophies and praxes. We thus delineate a path for unification through cultivating concord between the Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana schools.

1.1 21st Century Buddhism in the West

In an increasingly globalized world where factors such as internet, telephones and airplanes, where geographic distance are now easier to traverse in shorter times, contact with alternate worldviews is at an all time high. Although globalization may be seen as a factor that pollutes historical tradition, it also has potential for facilitating widely shared experience, and increasing understanding of Buddhist traditions outside a practitioner's primary affiliation. Intergroup contact theory delineates several ways in which appropriate forms of engaging people outside one's own social group fosters heartfelt connection with people different from oneself. Fellow members of one's sangha provide a helpful mirror for a person's behavior and manifestation in regards to the noble eight-fold path. Extending this to the larger maha-sangha of all Buddhist practitioners lends greater perspective to this essential feedback function.

Although all lineages share a common origin in northern India, distinct Buddhist traditions have diverged from each other as philosophy and praxis have migrated to new lands and faced the challenges of cultural and linguistic translation. In the millennia before the invention of mechanized means of long-distance travel, local traditions were easily maintained in relative isolation from one another, which resulted in relatively slow cultural exchange between far-flung groups. (This does not suggest that in earlier times there was no cultural exchange or that practices never varied due to contact with different groups, simply that these processes were much more limited than they are today.)

As counter-balance to this growing divergence, however, movements such as Tian Tai in China and Rime in Tibet have demonstrated possible approaches toward unification among some lineages. Within the last century, increasing availability of intercontinental transportation has accelerated the geographic distribution of Buddhism. Many parts of the globe that were not previously home to the Buddhadharma have been receiving immigrant practitioners and teachers from a growing variety of distinct Buddhist traditions. For example, scores of distinct lineages have converged in the West, each attracting thousands of disciples and developing multigenerational sanghas. As there is no native tradition of Buddhism extant in North America, all lineages of Buddhism have been transplanting into the United States for only a small number of generations.

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This close geographical proximity and overlap has yielded increasing opportunity for contact between traditions. In this new scenario, distinct lineages are encountering each other in a growing number of countries, affording the opportunity for one Buddhist lineage to interact extensively with one or more other Buddhist lineages (in addition to non-Buddhist traditions). In the USA, the three schools are geographically overlapping and coextensive. It is common for any major city to have communities in each school, and for there to be direct contact between different sanghas. Regardless of whatever cultural peculiarities may arise from western students, this scenario offers a case study for possible unification of philosophical traditions in a multi-tradition community.

Assimilating to the host culture only to a certain degree, immigrant communities may maintain cultural practices in a more distilled way than sanghas comprised mostly of converts to Buddhism. Immigrant sanghas may preserve a particular Buddhist tradition in language and other ways that may become transformed among people who have converted to Buddhism. Interaction between these immigrant and convert communities offers a catalyst for cultural exchange.

In this study three American Buddhists were interviewed by a Buddhist from a different lineage. Strikingly, all three of the interviewees had not only practiced outside of their current lineage, but also taught in lineages other than their current one. This echoes the current cultural exchange afforded by globalization and provides ripe ground for fostering a more empathetic approach to pan-sangha interaction.

1.2 Allport's Intergroup Contact Hypothesis

Advances in psychological research may provide one strategy for fostering a scientific glimpse into why interaction among disparate belief systems and cultures may foster concord among different Buddhist views. In 1954, Gordon W. Allport discovered that under appropriate conditions, interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice between members of two groups in conflict. His research has since been replicated and built upon, and is now known in psychology as the Intergroup Contact Theory. The Intergroup Contact Theory proposes that mere exposure or interaction with other ethnicities or groups reduces prejudice and cultivates empathy and care for another.

The reduction of prejudice through intergroup contact is based on a reconceptualization of group categories. Gordon Allport (1954) asserted that prejudice is a direct result of generalizations and over-simplifications that a person makes about an entire group of people, based on a misunderstanding of another person's view. Rothbart and John (1985) describe this change of view as "an example of the general cognitive process by which attributes of category members modify category attributes." Or in other words, an individual's view of a group can be modified by the person coming into contact with a member of that group who subsequently enables them to modify or elaborate their beliefs about the group as a whole. Intergroup Contact Theory is a testament to the power of direct experience that fosters increased and accurate awareness of reality - a process similarly supported by many Buddhist traditions.

In order for the fruits of intergroup contact to occur, however, four criteria must be met: both groups must enter into an equal status relationship; both groups must work on a mutual project and share this as a common goal; there must be opportunity for group members to get to know each other as friends; and an authority that both groups acknowledge must support the interactive contact between groups and members. Although forms of intergroup contact occur naturally, especially given circumstances afforded by globalization, it is difficult to fulfill all of these criteria.

This study seeks to provide an additional venue for intergroup contact through a new interview method that brings together Buddhists from different lineages and encourages dialogue about the Dhamma by virtue of their respective traditions. Direct experience and interpersonal interaction within a supportive environment may lay the grounds for more compassionate understanding of other Buddhist views.

1.3 Aims of this Paper

The subsequent sections of this paper establish a new method for fostering contact between Buddhist lineages, examine views held by particular Buddhist teachers, advance a theoretical perspective on Buddhist philosophy, and suggest educational applications of this work for university students. The novel method (“inter-viewing”) involves the interviewing of a Buddhist teacher about philosophy and praxis, and the next section reports on such a study in which one teacher from each of the Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana schools was interviewed. The reported empirical results focus on these teachers’ views, including their understanding of the relationship between right view and meditative realization. These results inform an empirically derived theoretical treatment of view and praxis, which is presented next. Finally, implications for educational application suggest course assignments that directly involve university students in using this interview method in order to afford new opportunities for unification among distinct Buddhist schools.

2 Method

2.1 Interviewers

The first and third author of this paper served as Interviewers. Both are Westerners, meditation teachers, and students in meditation lineages. They included one female instructor in the Taoist Pothiyalai tradition who also practiced Vipassana from the Mahayana school, and one male instructor in the Buddhist Rime tradition (with lineages in Kagyu, Nyingma, and Shambhala). As such, the process of the interviewers interviewing meditation teachers exemplified the novel “inter-viewing” method in action, since each interviewer interviewed a meditation instructor from a school outside of their personal tradition.

2.2 Participating Teachers

Three American meditation teachers in Boulder, Colorado agreed to be interviewed when so invited by the research team. These teachers were selected based on their long-standing reputation in the Boulder area as accomplished meditation teachers. The identity of each participant is kept confidential because the interview was conducted as part of a research protocol, and each teacher is designated in this report by the capital letter “T” (for Teacher) followed by a number (1, 2, or 3). T1 is a male teacher from a Vipassana (Theravada) tradition, T2 is a male teacher from a Zen (Mahayana) tradition, and T3 is a female teacher from the Kagyu Nyingma (Vajrayana) tradition. All three have had decades of teaching experience, teaching individuals and groups in urban meditation centers as well as rural retreat centers. T1 and T3 have taught meditation at Naropa University, and they have also taught meditation to their clients in psychotherapy practice. T1 and T3 have used media such as CDs and books to teach meditation, with T1 also utilizing the telephone and e-mail for teaching meditation.

2.3 Interview Instrument

Meditation teachers were interviewed using a semi-structured instrument that specifically addressed varying aspects of meditation instruction including preparation, instruction context, assessment, the purpose of meditation, non-duality, non-conceptuality, and so on. The instrument was designed by the two interviewers based on preliminary data garnered from a focus group of undergraduate students that elicited discussion of information they would like to know about their meditation instructors, and from interviewers' personal experiences as recipients of meditation instruction and as meditation teachers. To test the instrument and train interviewers, the instrument was piloted during two interviews with colleagues of the authors.

2.4 Procedure

Each interview session started with introductions and a few minutes of informal conversation so that everyone could feel comfortable. The interview itself began with this statement made by the interviewer "Our intention is to gain greater understanding of meditation instruction." Meditation teachers consented that their in-person interviews be audio-recorded and were informed that their identity would remain confidential. Teachers were informed that interviewers themselves were meditation teachers in order to convey that the interviewers had a suitable context for understanding of meditation instruction and meditation. A contemplative approach was utilized in conducting interviews, which involved an observer (a second member of the interview team, also a meditation instructor) mindfully holding the space for and being present in the interview. As the interview was being conducted with this contemplative approach, we noticed a personal process of deep reflection evident in each person. At times, interviewers asked follow-up questions and asked interviewees to give examples. The teachers themselves appeared to appreciate the thoughtful questions, the experience of being interviewed in this manner, and their own process of responding to interview questions. At the end of the interview, teachers were given the opportunity to comment on the interview process, procedure, and so on. Interviews lasted approximately one hour, were audio-recorded, and subsequently transcribed. The resulting verbal data were analyzed qualitatively using thematic content analysis.

3 Results

3.1 Multiple Training Lineages

Each teacher has trained in more than one lineage. T1 told us "My own teachers have been important models for me. Satchidananda, Trungpa Rinpoche, Trumpa Rinpoche, Kali Rinpoche, Dujan Rinpoche, Jack Kornfield, Sharon Salzberg, Joseph Goldstein. My current teacher is a woman named Yvonne Rand, she's been pretty helpful. Rebbe Zalman, who I worked with very closely for about 5 years. Father Thomas Keating was a teacher I studied centering prayer with. Ram Daas. I worked with 2 of his organizations. I feel like I've had incredible good fortune and many blessings to have access to these kinds of teachers." T2 mentioned his teachers have included "Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche and Eido Roshi", a Tibetan Vajra Master as well as Zen Priest. T3 started her training with Transcendental Meditation, before proceeding into extended training in Kagyu and Nyingma schools of Tibetan Buddhism. In addition to her Buddhist training, T3 credits "Being a therapist has... been helpful for me to be able to read people... particularly, body-based therapeutic training – Hakomi."

3.2 *Multiple Teaching Lineages*

T1 currently teaches Vipassana, but has taught “Primarily Vipassana meditation of the Theravada tradition. I also teach some Shamatha-Vipassana as taught through the Shambhala system. I have also taught various forms of guided meditation that I have used with relaxation processes for clients who have anxiety issues. I have also taught some centering prayer in the Christian tradition. I taught meditation in the yogic tradition.” T1 has taught in many distinct settings associated with a variety of traditions: “I first started teaching when I was living in Nepal in the 1986-1989 period. And I taught at a Tibetan Center called the Himalayan Yogic Institute that was associated with a teacher named Rama Yeshe. More currently, Rama Zota. And that’s an international system of Vajrayana centers that are located in 50 some centers around the world. So originally I taught at their city center. They had a country retreat center and a city center in Katmandu where I was living. And I taught - I actually taught insight meditation in the Theravada flavor, tradition, but I had a relationship with the people who ran the center and they invited me to teach weekends there. ... I taught in the Contemplative Psychology Masters degree program [at Naropa University] in 90-91. ... Eventually ending up at the Unitarian Church where the group still goes on and where I teach it on Tuesday nights.” In addition, “I include a certain amount of transpersonal psychology at times if I think it’s relevant to the Western students, and I make a particular effort when I give instructions on practice to be as clear as possible, so that the instructions that are transmitted are really clear to people.”

T1 presents something of a paradox with regard to tradition and innovation: “I have tremendous respect for the form that I’ve studied and practiced and that I teach. And I also have tremendous respect for people that taught me this particular method. And so, I have a strong commitment to the vision of the practice and its capacity to liberate people from their suffering and to love to real happiness and fulfillment. So, I have a strong commitment on one level to the integrity of the form, and at the same time, I trust myself as well in terms of the fact that my own background includes a lot of comparative religious study, and so I’m quite willing to draw upon that when I think it’s appropriate. And, generally, I think that enhances my teaching. It’s both and I don’t feel restricted, generally speaking, by the form or the method when I’m adhering to it.” Yet T1 maintains fidelity to the particular technique that he teaches, as evidenced by this statement: “And I’ll listen to see if what they’re doing is what the instruction really is, or if they are blending it with 3 other things they read in different books or got from different traditions or teachers, or if they’re making up their own practice...”

In contrast, T2 has restricted his teaching to zazen only. However, he has instructed students “from a variety of backgrounds - Vipassana, Tantric meditation, Zen.” With regard to his authorization to teach: “Actual teaching doesn’t happen until after the Dharma Transmission from the teacher. So that what is being taught is not your understanding, but the lineage’s understanding complete.” T2 also pointed out that “There are 700 Lutheran ministers in Germany ordained in zazen practice. The Benedictines in Snowmass practice zazen. Thomas Merton - I was just there - his monastery, and they practice zazen.”

T3 has taught in both Kagyu and Nyingma traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, Shambhala, and “as a therapist, sometimes what I do is I use meditation as a way for us to together drop down, and I’ll do a guided meditation so that they can learn how to do this for themselves”.

3.3 *Assessing Students*

Results indicated similarities among meditation teachers with regards to the means by which they assess meditation students. When discussing ways in which they assess students' development, all three teachers mentioned students' increased awareness, including an increased awareness of awareness, and their ability to talk about their meditation. While two teachers (T1, T2) mentioned that longevity (e.g., years) of regular practice factors into assessing students, all three teachers discussed using the ways in which students describe the quality of their meditation practice as means of assessment. T1 and T3 indicated that with more advanced students, their instructions became less directive than with intermediate or beginner meditation students. Measures of development included students' ability to deeply understand the "basic principles of the practice" (T1) and to understand their directions clearly. T1 noted: "As people progress and develop in practice, I start encouraging them to trust their own intuitive inner guidance more and to develop that sense of that capacity of inner guidance that [is such an] integral a part of the mature practice".

Teachers also described unique assessment methods. T3 utilized student's kindness, acceptance and humor as measures of students' development. A practical way that this could be assessed is, as T3 suggested, by observing a meditation student being willing to work with and accept their anxiety and resistance. For example, T3 described one of his student's progress as having "got real experience and an enormous amount of confidence by letting herself be with the worst kind of anxiety."

T2 utilized the content of what a student is working with in meditation to determine the student's stage of development. For example, a student whose mind is being pulled by every thought and emotion in meditation would be viewed by this teacher as likely being a beginning meditation student versus a student working with too much dullness or too much mental activity in his/her practice would be viewed as being more advanced.

Taken together, these results suggest that students' increased ability to describe their meditation experiences and the quality of their practice, as well as students' increased awareness and ability to have perspective on their own awareness, are components of praxis across different Buddhist traditions.

3.4 *View*

In alignment with the prospect of people "inter-viewing" (that is, intimately expressing and/or listening to another's view) via conducting an interview, T1 encouraged beginning students to explore practices among different Buddhist traditions. T1 likened the student's process of exploring meditative practices within different traditions to learning music: "Somebody comes to me and says I want to learn music. I say great. You know, do you want to learn the guitar, the violin, or the saxophone? And they say, well I don't know I just want to learn music. So I say, well try a few instruments...they go to a Shambhala weekend...go to a Zen weekend...eventually, hopefully, they land somewhere." This teacher's instruction and assessment of students was largely based on the value of being exposed to different traditions to deepen praxis, emphasizing the importance of praxis over philosophical lens. He said: "As people get more advanced, they're better able ... to identify the core principles that come into play in all of these traditions."

Results also indicated that teachers did not place importance on subscribing to a particular set of beliefs, philosophy or spiritual understanding. When asked if it mattered if their students held different views than their own, T1 and T2 indicated that the student's belief system was not important, whereas T3 asserted that beliefs may actually

get in the way of moment to moment experience, potentially interfering with this practice itself. In their instruction, all three teachers emphasized the praxis of meditation instruction over the teaching of philosophy.

3.5 *Direct Experience*

The importance of direct experience as a tool for contemplative education was evident in all three data sets. Results suggested that the intrinsic verity of direct experience was an immensely relevant component of actualizing the essence of a practice. With regard to the teaching and importance of philosophy, T1 said “Trust your own experience. There’s a particular sutra that’s the basic point of the teaching is that don’t believe a scripture, don’t believe a teacher, don’t take my word for anything. Try this. See what your experience is, and if it’s useful, use it. If it’s not, put it aside.” T2 shared this viewpoint, saying that within the Zen tradition a central teaching is the realization of emptiness, which is an “experiential situation” by its nature. Similarly, all teachers in this study emphasized the importance of experiencing the body and breath in the moment as a means to understand basic Buddhist principals. T3 described that at an introductory level, an “allegiance to being in the body and being with the breath and not hanging onto thoughts” is his basic teaching. Through directly experiencing their body and breath they are able to gain a wiser perspective that prepares them for further teachings. T2 also discusses his introductory teachings as being primarily body-based, emphasizing posture as a means to directly experience stillness: “The way we approach meditation is basically sitting in raw awareness. It’s an alignment of body, breath and mind. Body is straightened along a column in front of the spine. It is an organizational principle through the perineum to the top of the head. We begin with following the breath and allowing mental thoughts to occur as they occur but not indulging them. And then gradually residing in the space between the thoughts, which is the field of raw awareness. By establishing a point of stillness, then we can begin to really understand the moving mind and the still mind.” Through engaging with the sensory information, they are able to witness important teachings within the framework of their own body, employing direct experience as a potent teaching tool.

3.6 *Purpose of Meditation*

Each teacher was asked directly about the purpose of meditation, and the variety among their responses is enticing, as seen below in Table 1. Additional data pertaining to meditation purpose arose in response to questions that asked about other topics.

Table 1: Responses to the question “What is the purpose of meditation?”

Teacher	Complete Verbatim Response
T1	Liberation. Awakening. Enlightenment. Freedom. Choose your term. Full actualization of human potential would be another way to say it that’s a little more earthy, but also, I think, true. Someone once described the Buddha as a fully mature human being which is an image that I like.
T2	There is no purpose to meditation.
T3	To be more present with who you are and how you feel and what you’re doing. To be more aware and more - to see more clearly.

T1 explains meditation as “In that process, they have a direct and very personal experience of what in Buddhist practice would be called the 3 marks of existence, right? The impermanence, suffering if you cling, and the fact that there’s no solid somebody in

here who's the recipient of all this changing experience. And so this practice in particular is designed to move the 3 marks from a conceptual to a felt experience in one's being that leads to a kind of cellular change in the way people experience themselves and the world. ...It's analogous to brightening a flashlight and getting it really, really bright, so that when you then open the field, the awareness is really hot and alive and can observe the changing phenomena with great power and intensity. " He then goes on to exhort the importance of carrying over awareness into post meditation: "There's a whole set of teachings that we offer about what we call meditation in action, which is basically moving the principles of meditative awareness into daily life activities. ...It's really essential that the principles of meditation are understood in such a way to be not limited to formal sitting practice. So the notion of mindfulness, for example, applies as much to washing dishes as it does as paying attention to the breath or to some phenomenon of awareness in a formal sense. And so the emphasis is on seeing your life as your practice. Each moment is an opportunity to be mindful and relate with a compassionate awareness or not. "Yet T1 also recognizes a skillful flexibility inherent to the path of meditation: "And as you go up that spectrum of integration psychologically, people get increasingly interested in the liberation dimension of what practice allows them to access. So I see it as kind of a developmental spectrum, depending on where the person practicing is, they relate to it differently in terms of its function." None the less, he is able to offer a pith summary: "My experience, as well as my belief, is that meditation training is one of the most well established and effective ways to bring human potential to its full fruition."

For T2, "One of the objects or intents of the meditative process is to come to a deeper understanding of what's actually going on, which is quite difficult, to actually see, know what's going on. Even to get close to that is difficult to do. And then that's really to point. It's to acquire a condition of total ordinariness in relationship to what's going on. Being with - not pushing away from, or rejecting or trying to seduce or magnetize the reality. Just to actually know what is going on beyond the editing of your mind." Furthermore, "by establishing a point of stillness, then we can begin to really understand the moving mind and the still mind. ...Meditation is learning to work with what arises in the moment, period." And further still, "I mean, the subject largely is integration. People come to meditation frequently to get rid of this or that about themselves, and this is a real problem with the advancement in meditation. So, how to accept all parts that are going on and integrate them into one whole, so that everything contributes to being the present in the moment when there's part of you that's arguing and try to pull you away from that." T2 went on to say "I think that meditation is transformative over the long run. And I don't think it's so much of a skill set as it is a equanimity, peacefulness, generosity, tranquility, natural intelligence. There's a quality of the meditative mind that's tapped into a deeper resource than even your own personal learning has brought you. So there's a trust, an access to knowledge. But a deep trust that goes on with what happens in the moment. One skill may be to not try to manipulate and control your existence but be there while it's happening - a spectator, so to speak, of the phenomenal flow of existence." And finally: "It's not about attaining anything at all. It's about cutting through the vast mental delusion and storylines that we create every minute of our lives that keep us away from authentic experience. All meditation is about becoming genuine, who you are, true nature."

For T3, "Meditation is a process which increases awareness and increases mindfulness. ...I feel like meditation is the most intimate experience a person could have with themselves." In addition, "in terms of meditation in action, post meditation, how to shift the object of awareness into what's happening in their life."

3.7 *Nondual Awareness*

The central importance of nonduality and nonconceptual awareness was evident in the verbal data provided by all 3 teachers. When speaking of advanced students, T1 stated “Their questions tend to be a little more subtle and sensitive in terms of the aspects of meditation they ask about or want to talk about. I think in general the process has more depth and, and more power, oftentimes from the standpoint of spiritual energy and focus.” This same teacher also explained “There’s a point at which the notion of meditating and not-meditating dissolves. It’s a dualistic notion, and if we talk about meditation and post meditation, ...and meditation and daily life and so on and so forth, those are useful constructs I think, but to a point. And on another level, meditating at a certain point becomes synonymous with being, and at that point it’s non-dual and is just is-ness or such-ness.”

Similarly, but from a different perspective, T2 responds to the question “What is meditation?” with “Well, the way we approach meditation is basically sitting in raw awareness. It’s an alignment of body, breath and mind. ...And then gradually residing in the space between the thoughts, which is the field of raw awareness.” Furthermore, “From a zazen point of view, the essence is the understanding of emptiness - the experience of emptiness, and all of it is the establishment of that field.”

From still another vantage point, T3 distinguishes between meditators at a beginning stage and meditators at an intermediate stage with “Well, there’s more awareness of the awareness behind the process. So, people who have gone beyond just noticing overtly what’s happening. They have more of an awareness with the background of that. So, they might see through thoughts and notice gaps, and that in itself is seeing the see-er. I would consider that somebody more advanced rather than somebody who initially just sees things, lets them go, and comes back. So, more of a vipassana kind of awareness.” She also addressed the distinction between meditating and not meditating with “Sometimes meditation comes to you. You are not efforting, but that doesn’t mean that you’re not present. So, it becomes non-dual.”

3.8 *View Mixing With Nonconceptuality*

Seasoned practitioners are less narrow minded about view at level of relative truth, and show higher minded openness to what is common among Buddhist lineages. For example, T1 commented about students who over the course of many years train in multiple lineages: “And as people get more advanced, they’re better able to, to identify the core principles that come into play in all of these traditions.” For T1, “I draw tremendous inspiration and joy from the teachings and concepts and ideas that support me in practice. At the same time, I see clear limitations to conceptual understanding. ...I’m much more interested in a kind of non-dualistic reality that is. ...And any concept, however profound or primordial, is just a concept, right? So there’s a paradoxical dimension of both/and, which traditionally, in Buddhism, has to do with the absolute and the relative ...On the absolute level, concepts are just smoke dissolving into space. On the relative level, they are skillful means and essential to convey the teachings.”

T2 concisely offers yet another paradox: “Well, my own belief is paramount, because it regards all belief as a problem. So, I talk about pure mind - I mean empty mind, without any preconceptions or predisposition. That itself is a belief. I am very strongly involved with that belief.”

Similarly for T3: I think it’s a problem if the belief system gets in the way of moment to moment experience no matter what the belief, even if it’s a belief in all the philosophy of the tradition you’re coming from.

4 Discussion and Conclusions

4.1 *Right View*

All three teachers interviewed expressed similar perspectives concerning the importance and place of Right View within their practice. (This may be due to shared essential understanding of Buddhadhamma, rather than to shared elements of the cultural circumstances in which they teach.) When asked about the importance of having only one Right View (i.e. the importance of subscribing to a particular philosophy or belief system), they expressed that they placed a deeper value on practice, indicating an emphasis on praxis over philosophy.

Similarly, interview data indicated that beginning students' mundane understanding of Right View, the first factor on the Noble 8-Fold Path, often appears discrepant between traditions; however, when one's understanding of Right View transcends conceptual limits and is directly realized through deep practice, these discrepancies can dissolve. This suggests viability for concord between serious students of the Dhamma. Interestingly, two of the teachers had significant training and even experience teaching in more than one lineage. Perhaps inter-lineage contact facilitates realizing the profundity of Right View free from the discrepancy of sectarian ideology.

It has long been established that meditation and discipline are needed to support the deepening into ultimately wise Right View. Deep realization of the teachings may make it easier for a person to understand and appreciate the wisdom inherent in teachings of other lineages. Conversely, students may gain a deeper understanding of teachings presented within their own lineage by seeing this wisdom reflected in complimentary teachings provided by other Buddhist lineages.

Non-conceptual infusion of one's own view enables insightful recognition of the non-conceptual truth of another person's experience that lies behind their view. Some refer to this distinction in terms of ultimate vs. relative truth. It may be helpful for this to be addressed by teachers when their students are ready.

4.2 *Establishing Methods*

On a global level, one major outcome of this study was an embodiment of the intergroup contact theory and its potential for the cultivation of empathetic awareness of the other. By gathering data that reveal similarities and differences of right view, meditation, and instruction across lineages, the interview method itself brought together representatives from different lineages to have a structured dialogue about beliefs. The actual substance of these conversations offers an asset to searching for common ground between traditions. Who knows what benefit could result from such opportunities for different worldviews to interact? Many forms could be generated and explored, not limited to the standard modes of psychological research used in this study of focus group and interview.

4.3 *Implications for Education*

The proposed interview method has implications for both contemplative education as well as traditional education at the university level. The multiple layers of meaning in the word "inter-view," as proposed in this paper, may prove valuable for contemplative education. Inherently, contemplative education encompasses reflection, mindfulness and learning. Contemplative education aims to cultivate Right View through reflecting, seeing things as they are, and integrating mindful experience into learned material. The proposed method of interviewing, with interviewer and interviewee coming from different lineages,

invites meditation students to not only have an “inter-view,” where they are exposed to a different perspective on meditation practice, but also enhances students’ “intra-view;” that is, the internal lens through which students view themselves, their meditation practice, and themselves in relation to others and the world. Thus, the proposed method of contemplative interviewing may be an example of contemplative education. In addition, the proposed method of interviewing serves as a contemplative practice in and of itself.

The innovative interview method can be practically implemented and utilized in any university setting. For example, a professor can establish rapport with local meditation centers or Buddhist temples to help university students gain access to meditation teachers. Alternatively, professors can assign as homework that students find a meditation teacher within a particular lineage different from their own, necessitating that they first figure out culturally appropriate ways to approach meditation teachers and ask them to be interviewed. Students may then write about their experience interviewing a teacher from a lineage other than their own. Class discussions could focus on what students learned about meditation or philosophy from the experience. Students could also interview teachers in pairs, similarly to how the interviews were conducted for the current study. For example, one student could serve as the interviewer and the other student could serve as the observer, mindfully being present to the interview and noticing their visceral experience during the interview. The students could then debrief with each other about their experience of the interview. Thus, there are many ways that the interview method proposed in this study could be implemented in university settings. (A list of helpful interview questions will be provided as a handout at this conference, and can also be obtained by emailing the first author of this paper.)

College students who collaboratively interview teachers could benefit not only from the fruits intergroup contact yields, but could also be a means of broadening their understanding of Right View. One benefit of conducting an “inter-view” is that some differences in Right View between lineages may come to be understood as reflecting specific vantages on the same Dhamma, rather than incompatible Buddhist philosophies. In some ways, this mirrors the spacious ventilation of view that a matured practitioner may evince, where one transcends the conceptual boundaries between the way a lineage describes the Dhamma, and realize the higher truths that are universally present in Buddhist thought. Here the distinction between inclusivism vs. pluralism may be important, where an inclusivist approach assimilates content from another person’s view by translating it into one’s own pre-existing conceptual framework. In contrast, a pluralistic approach necessarily grows beyond the current limits of one’s conceptions in order make room for the conceptions provided by another person’s view.

Philosophy is important, yet praxis seems essential for avoiding the mistake of holding on to one’s own view as right. Nonconceptually infused Right View may be possible through extensive training and practice, and may also be facilitated through this inter-viewing, enabling disparate views to come into contact and increase empathetic awareness of a different perspective. We see the genuine value of inter-viewing as resting on the pivotal importance of direct experience of another wakeful human being. This new method contributes to contemplative education a novel contemplative practice in and of itself, and promotes intergroup contact among students and teachers from varying Buddhist traditions. Perhaps this method is most successful when it benefits from the profound presence of an accomplished teacher.

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