

Running head: TIBETAN BUDDHISM MEETS

Tibetan Buddhism Meets Western Psychology and Counseling:

A Dynamic Interface

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Introduction

Under the green leaves of a Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya, India, twenty five hundred years ago, a young male ascetic sat in a state of focused meditation and deep contemplation, and came to the final step of realizing his mind (Lama, 2002). Shakamuni Buddha's enlightenment produced a ripple that ultimately generated 84,000 teachings (Tulka, 1998) that formed the roots of Buddhism. Eventually Tibetan Buddhism was born from the seed of that profound moment, when after his enlightenment, the Buddha turned the wheel of dharma (teaching).

Over the course of many generations, the Buddha's teachings spread throughout the Asia-Pacific area, forming three schools of thought. Theravada, concerned with "morality and ethics and gathered in the Pali Canon" (Rinpoche, 1998, p. xl) moved into countries such as Sri Lanka and Thailand. Mahayana, with its perspective of "compassion and concern for others" (Rinpoche, 2008, p. xl) came to reside mostly in China, Japan, and Korea. Vajrayana, a body of teachings for the "rapid realization of one's mind" (Rinpoche, 2008, p. xl) evolved in Tibet. As Buddhism spread, it was infused with each new country's cultural flavor, creating an interface between the two (Rinpoche, 2008).

Buddhism came from India to Tibet around 765 when King Trisong Detseng asked Padmasbhava or Guru Rinpoche, a realized master from India, to teach in Tibet (Rinpoche, 1998). A master is a person who has thoroughly studied and practiced the teachings and realized their mind through them. They can then carry forward the teachings to their students (Rinpoche, 2008). Known as the second Buddha, as foreseen by Shakamuni Buddha, Guru Rinpoche was able to create a less hostile environment in Tibet to spread the Buddha's teachings, particularly Vajrayana, throughout the kingdom

(Rinpoche, 1998). The prevailing philosophy in Tibet at that time was the Bon religion (Wedemyer, 2005). Bon was an animistic, or nature based, religion (Rubin, 2008). This means that anything is capable of possessing a spirit, even natural geographical areas. Such areas could possess a spirit and also have other spirits living within it. It was also believed that all animals had souls. The Bon religion was an oral tradition, and acquired most of its written text when Buddhism came to Tibet (Rubin, 2008). The first recognized Bon teacher was Tonpa Sherab, who tried to spread the Bon teachings throughout Tibet but found that at that time many people were not open to it. Many Bon teachers were thought to be enlightened like the Buddha and came before his time (Rubin, 2008). Eventually, Bon and the first and oldest school of Tibetan Buddhism, the Nyingma tradition, borrowed from each other in a cross assimilation. For example, they shared meditation practices and teachers (Rubin, 2008) and Bon references to enlightenment, sacred teachings and realized masters who taught students and lay people show how the two schools influenced each other (Wedemyer, 2005).

In Tibet the Buddha's words produced many realized masters. These teachers, other lamas, the monks and Tibetan culture itself produced a rich body of works related to the teachings. Most importantly, in spite of the cultural adaptations, they preserved the original teachings of the Buddha from India whole and intact (Rinpoche, 1998). This rigorous preservation of the Buddha's words, whose main purpose is for human beings to realize their own minds, exists now as it did then. All of this laid the groundwork for the effect of Buddhism as it interacted later with Western culture.

In the late 1940's a significant event occurred in Tibet that had an impact on Tibetans and the rest of the world. The Chinese government invaded Tibet and began an

aggressive campaign of assimilation against the people there who lived and breathed the teachings (Osho, 2000). Chinese authorities harassed, imprisoned or killed Tibetan Buddhist teachers. Monasteries that housed the teachers, lamas, nuns, and students were closed or destroyed, and many of the rich bodies of works were burned (Osho, 2000). The invasion also forced the spiritual leader of the country to flee to save his own life and move into exile in Dharmasala, India. That leader was the 14th Dalai Lama, who won the Nobel Peace prize in 1989 (Hopkins, 2002). Along with the many other masters who had to leave Tibet, the Dalai Lama had a desire to pass on their knowledge and preserve the teachings (Rinpoche, P., 1998). This has given westerners a profound and unprecedented opportunity to study Buddhism, and become practitioners under educated and trained teachers from Tibetan Buddhist lineage (Rinpoche, P., 1998).

The focus of this paper is a literature review exploring the interface between Tibetan Buddhism and western culture and their mutual impact on each other within the realm of counseling and psychology. While the early evolution and diffusion of Buddhism was a relatively slow and stable process, the latest migration into the west has been fast paced, and characterized by rapid assimilation. The literature review will examine the attempts to modify traditional Tibetan Buddhism in the West and adapt it to the western counseling and psychology professions. This will be contrasted with the effort to preserve Tibetan Buddhism in its traditional form, and the effect of that approach on western counseling and psychology. This divergence has generated controversy, so the benefits and disadvantages of both these approaches will be explored, and possibilities for future directions will be considered. Finally, recommendations will be offered on ways in which Tibetan Buddhism can benefit counselors and their clients.

History of Tibetan Buddhism

Buddhism came to Tibet when King Trisong Detsen invited a Buddhist master from India, Padmasambhava Guru Rinpoche to teach in Tibet. He established an environment in Tibet conducive for teachings and created the first monastery for texts and for teaching (Rubin, 2008), which ultimately produced many famous masters, such as Longchenpa (1308-1363), an impressive master and scholar of the Nyingma school (Rinpoche, 1998). There are four main schools in Tibetan Buddhism. The first and oldest school is the Nyingma from the eighth century. The other three schools are Kagyupa, Sakapa and Gelugpa, which developed after the tenth century (Rinpoche, 1998). The Nyingma school was focused on actual practice and a monastic life to support that practice. The Sakya school was handed down through family lines. The Kagyu had a continuous lineage of reincarnated teachers. The Gelug school pursued extensive study and intellectual debates on the Buddha's teachings. The 14th Dalai Lama comes from the Gelug school (Rubin, 2008). In Tibet the teachings are preserved through lineage, passed on from scholars and masters to their students. After a great deal of education and personal practice, the students then become teachers themselves.

The teachings in Tibet are contained in a sacred book, The Tibetan Buddhist Canon, which is comprised of three hundred volumes of teachings and commentaries, which date from the time of the Buddha (Rinpoche, 1998). Another important aspect of Tibetan Buddhism, particular to the Nyingma school, is the set of Vajrayana teachings. These teachings were brought by Guru Rinpoche to Tibet and are specific teachings for quicker realization of the mind through meditation and very specific skills (Rinpoche, 1998).

The Buddha's seminal teachings, on which all trainings pivot, are the Four Noble Truths. These truths came after his enlightenment (Dzongsar, 2007). The Four Noble truths can be briefly outlined here. The First Truth is that life always has suffering. The non-recognition of the impermanence of all things is the basis of our suffering. The Second Truth is that craving, desire and attachment lead to suffering. The Third Truth is that to stop suffering one must stop grasping and self-cherishing. The Fourth Truth leads to the Eightfold Path. The eight precepts of that path are: right view, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness and concentration (Anderson, 2004). By having the right view, one causes no harm. Dzongsar indicates that through holding the right view, wisdom flows, "motivation and action" are correctly directed and right view "guides you on the path of Buddhism" (p. 4).

The recognition of the Four Noble truths is also a foundation for reflection in meditation. The two traditional Tibetan Buddhist practices of meditation are samatha and vipashyana (Genoud, 2009). Samatha slows the mind down, focuses it and stabilizes it (Genoud, 2009). This stabilizing of the mind lays the groundwork for vipashyana, which goes into a deeper exploration and insight into the mind (Genoud, 2009).

The arrival of Tibetan Buddhist traditions in the west has presented an unparalleled opportunity to learn from authentic Tibetan masters, and to learn how to focus our scattered minds and work towards realization. As indicated by Tworkov in "Is Buddhism surviving America?" "...in a society that is that is so full of excessive clutter, it is an opportunity to explore the unknown" (Edlestein, 1998, para.10). The guides into this unknown come from Tibetan Buddhism. They are realized masters who carry the lineage of the teachings. The lineage of the teachings is critical as it preserves and passes down

from master to student the words of the Buddha, which is the path to enlightenment (Rinpoche, T., 1998). This transmission of teachings from realized master to student has been going on since Buddha first began teaching (Rinpoche, T., 1998). It is pointed out that a true lineage holder, a truly qualified teacher must have actually attained realization (Rinpoche, P., 1998). This is similar to the therapist-client dynamic which can create a relationship that supports exploration and healing, but the relationship with one's Tibetan Buddhist teacher takes it further yet. It is there to help a person to explore the relationship with his or her own mind (Rinpoche, T., 1998). The relationship with a master is an important commitment and this powerful relationship is explored in the documentary film "Unmistaken Child", a cultural gem that really shows the deep commitment Tibetan Buddhist students have for their teachers. The documentary follows a devoted Tibetan Buddhist monk, guided by Tibetan Buddhist teachers in his search throughout the Tibetan countryside for 4 years, for a child who is his reincarnated master (Baratz, Alexander, Bernstein, & Baratz, 2008). The filmmaker shows us that this relationship transcends this lifetime. Dzongsar Rinpoche (2006) points out that if you and a master find each other, "it is greatly fortunate" (p. 122).

The relationship with the teacher is meant to challenge a student. A Tibetan Buddhist proverb indicates that "If you get too close, you get burned; if you stay away you don't get much heat" (Baker, Casper, & Trungpa, 1973, p. 43). It is argued that the teacher is the only person who, through their unlimited spirituality, has the skill and capability to guide a student properly through meditation, foundational teachings or mind trainings to realize one's Buddha nature (Rinpoche, P., 1998). Without a master, one's mind is too obscured and dualistic to see things clearly (Rinpoche, N., 1998). Western psychology

has tended to believe that this important relationship can be altered or minimized and still maintain its essence (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006). Meditation practices alone do not replicate the teacher student relation (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). As Torkow points out, in spite of any language problems it is to her Asian teachers that she turns when she wants see an authentic “awakened mind” (in Edelstein, 1998, para.7).

Tibetan Buddhism and Psychology:
B. Alan Wallace in Particular

B. Alan Wallace, Jon Kabat-Zin, and Jack Kornfield are all monastic westerners and each holds a different view about Buddhism and western psychology. Kabat-Zinn (2005) developed Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction and Kornfield has put his focus into Insight meditation (Silberman, 2010). B. Alan Wallace’s perspective on the interface is explored in the following articles.

Wallace’s curriculum vitae read like a book. It is a fifteen-page paper that documents his life, career and scholarly pursuits and contributions in the areas of Tibetan Buddhism and western thought (Wallace, 2010). He is a professor, researcher and writer as well as a translator of both Tibetan and Sanskrit. He has written books about Tibetan Buddhism as well as books about Tibetan Buddhism and science. He is a consultant and facilitator and has facilitated conferences and conversations with the Dalai Lama. He has earned many awards and accolades. He is able to navigate in many worlds and he is a Tibetan Buddhist practitioner. Because of his important contributions to our understanding of both the effect of Buddhism on the west as well as the effect of western thought on Tibetan Buddhism, the next few articles to be examined have all either been written or contributed to by him. The literature explores the interface between Tibetan Buddhism and western psychology and counseling.

The article “Mental Balance and Well-Being: Building Bridges Between Buddhism and Western Psychology” (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006) explores both the convergences and divergences between these two elements. Wallace and Shapiro point out that one difference is the manner in which mental health is viewed. Western psychology has been primarily approaching mental health by means of a disease model, with the attendant systems of assessment and treatment. Only recently has there been a movement towards viewing mental balance in a healthier light (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). On the other hand, they point out that for over 2500 years Buddhism has looked specifically at the mind and its well-being. This point of view and the importance of compassion and wisdom have been particularly cultivated in Tibetan Buddhism (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). Buddhist practices create extraordinary states of awareness, which in turn create a psychological perspective for any treatment that naturally flows from this insight (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). By working towards a state of equanimity, or mental balance, the authors point out that from a Buddhist perspective, one naturally develops a deeper sense of compassion and wisdom towards oneself and others. These qualities of compassion and wisdom are important principles for mental healthiness in Buddhism. Furthermore, it can be argued that freedom is experienced when one’s mind is not conflicted or in duality (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). Happiness is possible then because a client is no longer oriented towards or in pursuit of outer objects, nor is the client unsettled by internal discord. As follows, this state of well-being and calm can be a goal of counseling as well.

In order to create a bridge between Buddhism and western psychology and to make the article easier to understand, Wallace and Shapiro (2006) created a model with

operational terms. Although learning the terms was a somewhat ponderous process, they did make an effort to define them clearly. One term they use is “conative balance” which describes the act of simultaneously looking after one’s own interests as well as the interests of others, and this is seen as a means of creating a sense of well-being (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006, p. 696). They give a detailed explanation of what happens when pursuing illusory rewards and objects to the detriment of one’s self and others. This derailment causes collective and individual states of mental unhappiness and suffering. Wallace discusses the remedies for suffering, which include meditation on suffering and the reality of impermanence. He does a succinct analysis of emotional disequilibria and the many remedies that Buddhist teachings have for these unhappy states of mind (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006).

From a western psychology perspective, Wallace and Shapiro (2006) note how we are driven by our hyperactivity and lack of attention, which causes a scattered mental state. They suggest that bringing in a Buddhist model of meditation and breathing and focused awareness could help correct this imbalance. Wallace and Shapiro also note that mindfulness meditation, which also uses breathing and focus, is being integrated into new and unique therapies such as Dialectical Behavioral Therapy and Acceptance Commitment Therapy. Although it may seem to bring advantages, they argue that there is still a need for more empirical studies. The questions that might be asked in the studies include: what are the mechanisms of its success, and what will the use of randomized comparison groups indicate (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). In their article, Wallace and Shapiro point out the directions in which Buddhism and western psychology and counseling could converge, which was explored in their innovative model. Buddhism,

they note, views the mind not as “intrinsically unbalanced” but rather as habituated to behaviors that can be undone by steady work with Buddhist practices and remedies (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006, p. 699). Western psychology promotes psychological well-being for clients through therapeutic practices and goal-setting. Ultimately, both would like to see a reduction in suffering and an increase in mental wellness.

The next article, to which Wallace also contributed, was derived from a conversation with the Dalai Lama and practicing Tibetan Buddhists and psychologists (Ekman, Davidson, Ricard & Wallace, 2005). The issues that were addressed dealt with destructive emotions, lasting happiness, and the difficulties and challenges of doing empirical research on a Tibetan Buddhist point of view. Ekman et al. indicate that research has been done with the brain about the important connection between thinking and emotions. In a Buddhist perspective, feelings that lend to a balanced mental state tend to support our ability to explore the nature of our minds and reality. As expressed in the prior article, meditation, mind training and practice produce a clarity and understanding of mind. As an outgrowth of this, compassion develops, as does the understanding of our connections to one another. This connecting produces optimal states of mental well being for ourselves and for those around us (Ekman et al., 2005). As noted earlier, creating community, recognizing our interdependence and feeling well with one another and ourselves is also a potential goal in counseling. The article explores some of the destructive emotions that cause us to be in conflicted states such as hatred, grasping, jealousy and arrogance. Ekman et al. indicate that ultimately they lead us into much suffering. They argue that happiness can be developed as a trait or disposition and does not have to be transitory, and they believe that this can be developed through consistent

and committed practice and meditation to “free oneself from afflicted mental states” (Ekman et al., 2005, p. 61). They argue that in western psychology only psychopathologies have generated any interest in working with traits (Ekman et al., 2005). However, the authors note that through sustained effort using Buddhist practices, anyone can achieve a calming of their mind and an understanding of the nature of mind (Ekman et al., 2005).

The authors indicate that in research, Buddhism and psychology and therapy can converge in the area of neurobiology and in exploring Buddhist views on the definition of well-being. They also advocate using long term practitioners in studies to determine more refined and specific perceptions of “immediate and past emotional experiences” and to reduce bias in reporting, since they are able to maintain equanimity and a continuous awareness of the true nature of reality (Ekman et al, 2005, p.60). The authors would like to see Buddhism itself acknowledged as a form of therapy for clients and anyone seeking an improved state of mental well being (Ekman et al, 2005.).

B. Alan Wallace Interview and Writings

B. Alan Wallace, a western academic trained in Tibetan Buddhism in Asia, has an edge in understanding both cultures. Furthermore, he is able to translate both Tibetan and Sanskrit (Wallace, 2010). He is therefore able to bring the teachings to the west without losing either the cultural richness or the understanding of Tibetan Buddhist practices. This is useful in that he brings insight to the interface of the two cultures and makes Tibetan Buddhist practices such as meditation more accessible for westerners. In an interview, Wallace is asked about his concerns for Buddhism in the west (Hodel, 2001). Wallace indicates that our culture, unlike Tibet’s, is not grounded in a daily practice of

contemplation as a cultural norm nor do we have a monastic tradition supported by our entire society (Hodel, 2001). He argues that this fact in itself as well as our lifestyles that are hectic due to juggling family and work do not support extensive retreats for exploring our minds. Feminist therapists and Tibetan Buddhist practitioners have made similar points in their observations of the interface of the west and Buddhism (Gross, 2005).

Wallace is concerned that as we move away from the traditions and culture of Tibetan Buddhism with our practices in the west, we will lose the contextual wealth (Hodel, 2001). This context is the corner stone of spirituality and mental well-being for Tibetan Buddhism, a society grounded in daily contemplation, practices, and rituals devoted to realizing their minds for everyone's benefit. Their context also includes having resident lamas and abbots available to teach students and guide them in understanding the significance of their vows and commitments, foundational practices and meditation. The essence of Wallace's view is his concern for the loss of enlightened masters and teachers both for Tibet and the west (Hodel, 2001). Without realized masters, we could lose all of the carefully preserved knowledge from Tibet that has been passed down generationally from the Buddha (Hodel, 2001). Realized masters are critical individuals that have come to extraordinary states of mind and are in a position to teach and guide others. Wallace wonders if we even have any such individuals yet in the west (Hodel, 2001).

Although some people may disagree with Wallace's perspective, he raises an important concern and urgency about the degradation of Tibetan Buddhism in the west. He does present some possibilities to address these concerns. He would like to see centers with high standards for study and psychological research examining what is working, why it is working and what is beneficial. He particularly advocates using a

practitioner's experience as part of the inquiry (Hodel, 2001). Ultimately, as Kornfield points out, it is critically important to cultivate the next younger generation and train them very thoroughly while they still have the benefit of some of the older masters and the insight of the highly educated and dedicated western teachers, who have trained in both cultures (Silberman, 2010).

B. Alan Wallace has also been able to take his experience and training and write books that make Tibetan Buddhism accessible to the west. In Wallace's (1999) book, "Boundless Heart: The Four Immeasurables" he reaches out to readers and explains important foundational Tibetan Buddhist concepts. He discusses why practice is worthwhile: it addresses our suffering (Wallace, 1999) and suffering is again, continuously seen and worked with in counseling. He elaborates in an intelligent and yet accessible style about concepts and practices such as the meditation practice of Samatha. He also explains the foundational practice of the Buddha's Four Noble Truths, which include "loving kindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity" (Wallace, 1999, pp. 87-149). He organizes the material in a way that is easy to digest, explaining each principle and ending with questions and responses. Most importantly, he does not lose sight of his own traditional training, bringing a clarity and accessibility to students in the west without losing or compromising the cultural context of Tibetan Buddhism. It can be argued that this view supports a well grounded and healthy practice for exploring and understanding the nature of our minds whether through one's own meditation practice or through counseling informed by Tibetan Buddhism.

Meditative Practices and Western Psychology/Counseling:
A Complex Interface

Walsh and Shapiro (2006) have written a comprehensive article on meditation and counseling. They break down the information into sections related to areas in which contemplative practices and philosophies and western thinking have collided. Critical thinkers such as B. Alan Wallace and Ken Wilbur also gave valuable input to the article (Walsh & Shapiro, 2009). It is advantageous for someone like Wallace to offer his perspective, as mentioned earlier, because he has experience in both cultures (Wallace, 2010). The authors indicate that western psychology may continue to contribute to a lack of understanding due to an ethnocentric and culturally insensitive viewpoint (Walsh & Shapiro, 2009). They are also concerned about the resultant issue, which is the loss of the context in which meditative practices and philosophies have historically developed. They suggest that the end result of this would be western “colonization of the mind” by psychology (Walsh & Shapiro, 2009, p.228). This narrowing and remixing could have important consequences for the broader domain of our understanding of the nature of the mind and human development.

In their discussion of these concerns, Walsh and Shapiro (2006) deftly navigate through these turbulent waters, showing how the two may meet and enrich one another. They first look at meditation and its long history and how each culture has supported it. Examples include Tibetan Buddhism, Christian contemplation, Taoism, Judaic Kabala, and Sufi practices (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006). They also discuss the types of meditation, from single focus on one thought to developing the qualities of compassion and insight as seen in Tibetan Buddhism (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006). They also point out that western research is relatively young within this context. They do however acknowledge that some inroads have been made in research, including the success that meditation has had

with stress reduction and improving coping skills (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006). They would like to see more research into why and how meditation practices work. They would also like to see research make use of very advanced meditators because of the remarkable and unusual capacities of mental stability that they have been able to achieve through the exploration of their minds (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006). The authors also address the need for better methodological approaches and argue for comparisons between meditation and counseling therapies as well as comparisons within the various meditation disciplines themselves for individual effectiveness (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006). It could also be argued that empirical research is needed to determine which therapies or practices most benefit which people, and in which conditions (Baer, 2003). These conclusions about research have significant implications. However, it is clearly important that research not get stuck within the constraints of reductionist western thinking. This reductionist approach which largely restricts itself to defining meditation through operational terms and mechanisms of change does not however account for the multiple perspectives and cultural-historical context of meditation practices. Baer suggests that researchers would be remiss if they did not bring in new research concepts such as awareness and wisdom. A lot would be lost for both sides if that were the case.

Walsh and Shapiro (2006) indicate that the process of meditation is one of metaphors such as calming and freeing oneself of illusion. They regard this as a potential technique for counselors and clients to explore for cultivating focused awareness. In turn this could help in symptom reduction and a more truthful understanding of one's self through a deeper knowledge of the nature of one's mind. The authors also believe that by studying meditation, western psychology can benefit by learning about the many levels of

consciousness rather than just the western perspective of one waking consciousness or the consciousness of dysfunctional states (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006). Buddhism in particular promotes exploring the many levels of consciousness as a way to develop compassion and understanding about our interdependence with everything. Counselors would likely agree with this idea because they grasp the idea that mental health and well-being are tied to our connections with each other and our communities.

Walsh and Shapiro (2006), creatively suggest that therapists who are also trained in meditation would be beneficial during long meditation retreats to help process what may come up psychologically for practitioners as they explore the depths of their minds. They also discuss the benefits of meditation for health care practitioners. The authors argue that it would not only benefit them in understanding the effects of meditation but could enhance their personal ability to deal with stress better in their own occupations.

Although some readers may challenge this view, Gabor Mate (2009), a doctor on the downtown eastside of Vancouver, BC, relates how meditation helped him to increase his capacity at work, reduced his stress and gave rise to greater compassion for his clients. It could be argued that this is a way that counselors could benefit their clients and themselves through meditation. Wallace and Shapiro (2006) would like to see more research conducted with serious and seasoned practitioners because of the practitioners' ability to explore what their sustained and focused awareness has achieved. They have increased capacities in the areas of peak experiences, lucid awareness in multiple states of consciousness, reduction of destructive emotions, moral growth and increased compassion. Although readers may not agree with the authors on the importance of understanding these abilities, Walsh and Shapiro make a clear argument that in our state

of chaotic thinking and due to the underdevelopment of our minds, we could miss knowing about our true humanity and deep capacity for healing, love, compassion and enlightenment. This potential for growth and evolution can come from exploring and knowing one's mind, a good argument for the meeting of Buddhism and western psychology for mutual understanding and exploration.

Tibetan Buddhism meets:
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Therapy
and Insight Meditation

All three of these approaches offer ways to work with clients in a therapeutic setting and all have benefited from Tibetan Buddhism. The focus for all of them is meditation and mindfulness, which helps with addressing emotions, behavior, suffering and calming the mind (Kumar, 2002).

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

In Kumar's (2002) article, he suggests that the expansion of Tibetan Buddhism into the west arrived on a wave of change the "1960's Humanist movement" (p. 41). Like the Tibetan Buddhists, western psychology also had a need to understand the nature of suffering. Meditation and self-examination became a means to address this area. In Cognitive Behavioral Therapy as well as Tibetan Buddhism, it is important to examine one's assumptions about ones self and others as these can be a source of our suffering in us and in our interrelationships. Kumar (2002) hopes that making this kind of inquiry will bring about personal and spiritual growth for people. Harrington and Pickles (2009) indicate that the influence of Tibetan Buddhism, particularly in terms of meditation and mindfulness, has helped produce a "3rd wave" of development in CBT (p. 315). They see

Dialectical Behavior, CBT Mindfulness Therapy and Acceptance Therapy as examples of this kind of growth in the area of CBT.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy, created by Marsha Linehan from the University of Washington, was specifically designed for work with clients suffering from borderline personality disorder. It incorporates CBT skills that address a client's thoughts and beliefs with a mindfulness component (Behavior Research & Therapy, 2006).

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy is also a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and also utilizes mindfulness. ACT's focus is for work with clients who have chronic depression. The core components of mindfulness are: looking at the client's delusions about their beliefs, allowing what's happening to happen, staying present in the moment with it, and eventually taking an action (Serani, 2011). Mindfulness Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, based on Kabat-Zinn's MBSR therapy and adapted to CBT by researchers and psychologists, Teasdale, Williams, and Segal has also been found to be effective with reoccurring depression (Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy, 2007).

Nevertheless, Harrington and Pickles (2009) indicate that there are concerns that the core principle of CBT may not be compatible with Tibetan Buddhism because of the "mystical nature" of Tibetan Buddhism juxtaposed to CBT's cognitive based thinking. They indicate it is like "comparing astrology to astronomy or chemistry to alchemy" (p. 316). They believe that CBT techniques explore events and the thinking and assumptions made about those events. They believe mindfulness is just viewing one's thoughts (Harrington & Pickles, 2009). They also express a concern that mindfulness may be value laden and therefore not as effective for clients who are not immersed in the Tibetan culture. Being pulled from its cultural context, they question how many western clients

would have the context to practice mindfulness meditation. They believe that Buddhism is “pre-scientific” and not rational in its approach and therefore is tenuous as a therapeutic model (Harrington & Pickles, 2009, p. 321). They do not believe that the Tibetan Buddhism’s goal of enlightenment is compatible with the direct and easily understood principles and goals of CBT (Harrington & Pickles, 2009).

Baer (2003) takes the position that although mindfulness seems to have some validity as an intervention, she would like to see more research done. She explains that in spite of the fact that it is being used effectively for stress reduction in clinics and hospitals, it nonetheless needs to be evaluated in terms of its “clinical significance” (p. 139) and therapeutic outcomes. In other words, did the meditation help people diminish the problem that they came in with initially? Baer would like to see randomized trials to isolate the possible influencing factors and to determine whether clients have had a change in their thinking processes or quality of life. Baer also advocates the use of easily understood operational terms for mindfulness, and clear guidelines for the specific conditions and individuals for which mindfulness is beneficial. Baer does give at least some recognition to the lack of cultural context. She wonders what the outcomes will be as mindfulness is empirically dissected and removed from the other important concepts of compassion, wisdom and awareness which are intrinsic to Tibetan Buddhist mindfulness meditations. Baer suggests it might be a sound idea to find a way to include those values in research. Although she advocates for more methodological research she also deems it important for the clients that these values be present, rather than to just focus on lessening problems.

The intention of the article by researchers Roemer and Orsillo (2003), funded by the National Institute of Health, was to look further into the benefits of mindfulness intervention. Roemer and Orsillo considered Baer's suggestions and indicate that they too would like to see more evidence on the outcome of the treatments and how mindfulness actually works. Their inquiry also involves a closer look at CBT hybrids that have a component of mindfulness in them, such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Dialectical Therapy and CBT Mindfulness. They note that CBT therapies are quite structured in their systems of awareness whereas in mindfulness, one observes without judgment (Roemer & Orsillo, 2003). A drawback that they also note is that CBT can be quite goal oriented and mindfulness is "non-striving" (Roemer & Orsillo, 2003, p. 9). They would like research to pull these apart and examine more closely each component, as well as the use of the breath in mindfulness. They would like to see more analysis of the effect of the various types of breathing on the nervous system and how clients are before and after treatment. They are also concerned about how one would measure the growth of compassion in a laboratory setting and therefore advocate for a collaborative relationship with clients ((Roemer & Orsillo, 2003) to ascertain any changes and benefits.

The emphasis in both articles is to determine through research what the benefits of mindfulness are, and where those benefits can best be applied with an eye to long-term changes for clients.

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction

Jon Kabat-Zin (2003), the originator of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction therapy indicates that he sees MBSR presently adding to counseling, psychology and medicine but predicts a greater interest as he sees MBSR as being at the forefront of new

therapies. He believes that the Buddha's teachings are for every one and that the teachings are important as they address our suffering. The Buddha also gives remedies for the emotional poisons that we suffer: greed, hatred, ignorance and delusion. By meditating and closely observing the mind, suffering can be lessened (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). He agrees with the Buddha's concepts, that greed, hatred and ignorance have a profound impact on our mental health and well-being. For research, he advocates the use of brain imaging with PET scans, CAT scans and MRI to scientifically understand the mechanisms and effects involved in the brain when a person meditates, in an attempt to provide evidence based research to support these practices (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Kabat-Zin also acknowledges the importance of the student-teacher relationship in Tibetan Buddhism but argues that meditation teachers in MBSR need not have a deep immersion into Buddhist practices, but at least an understanding of where the meditation practice is rooted. Some traditional Tibetan Buddhist practitioners may challenge this view because of the importance of the teacher-student relationship. It could be argued that Kabat-Zinn is replacing one type of teacher and culture for another in his westernizing of meditation. However, Kabat-Zinn does have some reservations about his idea. He notes that by not having the teacher- student relationship, critical in Tibetan Buddhism, clients can lose the re-enforcement and discipline which helps lead to success in meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). He also notes that this is not easily accepted in our western culture, which is still trying to comprehend the rapid growth of Tibetan Buddhism in North America. He also argues in "Wherever You go There You Are" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003) that the reductionist thinking present in western thinking does not promote an understanding between the cultures and he would like a better conversation that has cultural sensitivity between

Buddhist meditation, MBSR meditation and western researchers doing evidence-based research on meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 2003) His intention in developing MBSR was to make meditation and mindfulness more accessible to western therapy and the medical world as a therapeutic healing model. He sees the use of breath and focusing the mind as a remedy for our over stimulated and overloaded minds (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Given our fast paced society, the “not doing” of mindfulness acts as a counterweight to the suffering, which is compounded by the mindless overdoing of western culture (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 38). His book explores how slowing down is important as the moment is the only thing we have; the past is gone and the future is not here yet. In his continued effort to address society’s ills, Kabat-Zin has written “Coming to Our Senses” (2005). It is a book divided into small digestible chapters about how we are driving ourselves into a continuum of constant distraction through an unsatisfactory outward focus. He points out that people who attend his clinic often come because of pain and afflicted emotional states and through MBSR have been able to reclaim themselves (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). He believes that we are an attention-deficit society, with overwhelmed nervous systems driven by “pervasive mediocrity” on a daily basis (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p.148) and that this is compromising our mental and physical health, adding to our suffering. He sees MBSR offering a place of calm in this accelerated pace of our world. He suggests as well that rather than medicate children (some as young as three) for ADD/ADHD, using MBSR might be an appropriate alternative (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). This point of view is supported by Gabor Mate (2009) who works with addicts on the downtown east side of Vancouver, BC. He also believes that many addicts are driven by untreated ADHD and will go to extremes to avoid spending any time with themselves or reflecting on their own minds.

Mate equates their lives to that of the hungry ghost realm in Tibetan Buddhism where beings wander endlessly in the realm of unfulfilled needs. Through his own exploration with meditation and mindfulness, he has been able to calm his own mind and it has given rise to greater compassion for himself and his clients (Mate, 2009).

Finally, Kabat-Zinn (2003) explores the disconnection that people are feeling from themselves due to their fast-paced lives and sees the MBSR environment as a place to slow down and explore meditation. He notes that in his MBSR program people reconnect with themselves and with others in this supportive and therapeutic atmosphere. Healing occurs in this interdependent matrix. This idea of sangha is also an important concept in Tibetan Buddhism, and it is an example of how the group works together to mutually support each other in their practice. Kabat-Zinn advocates MBSR as a methodology to help people find more meaning in their lives, lessen their suffering, and know the source of their agitation. He believes that through meditation and mindfulness an inner calm and happiness can be found (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

Two other articles that discuss evidence-based research on MBSR are Golden and Gross (2010) and Perleman, Salomans, Davidson and Lutz (2010). The research by Perleman et al. involved the use of “noxious stimulants” as sensory stimulants to meditators (p. 65) to observe how the meditators responded. Researchers found that the experienced meditators, Tibetan monks, as opposed to the short-term meditators, were able to reduce any pain or repetitive thinking. This is similar to the manner in which CBT is able to stop ruminative thinking in clients (Perleman et al., 2010). Further studies are suggested to help the researchers attempt to isolate any influencing factors such as how a meditator breathes, for instance, through their mouth or nose. In the other study

Golden and Gross took a clinical approach to studying MBSR also, and used an MRI to track electrical signals associated with behaviors. They discovered that there was a significant lessening in the amygdala in the brain, the area associated with flight, fright and freeze (Levine, 2010). They also saw a lessening of fear and anxiety and believe that when used along with western psychology and counseling therapies that employ cognitive-affective techniques meditation could be beneficial in maintaining thoughts and sensations more in the present moment with the breath (Golden and Gross, 2010). They view this as useful in counseling with social anxiety in order to reduce the effects of the anxiety to a more manageable level. They advocate for future studies of MBSR and self-reporting as a way to qualify the effects of MBSR on quality of life (Golden and Gross, 2010).

Insight Meditation

The founder of Insight Meditation, Jack Kornfield, was also a Buddhist monk and therefore brings a traditional training as well as his own western thinking to meditation. He founded Spirit Rock Center in northern California and the Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts (Silberman, 2010). Both centers support ongoing training, education and counseling with Insight or Vipassana meditation (Silberman, 2010). In Buddhist meditation, there are two practices, Samata and Vipassana. Samata helps the practitioner stabilize their mind so that a practitioner can use the skills of Vipassana (Genoud, 2009). Vipassana is to cultivate a one-pointed focus to examine the nature of mind (Silberman, 2010). Kornfield says that through his commitment to meditation he was able to deeply explore his mind and at a place of realization became aware of what he named “the particle physics of consciousness”(Silberman, 2010, p.48). He was also influenced by a

Tibetan Buddhist Master, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche who had come to the west in the 1970's and established one of the first schools for Buddhist studies, Naropa, in Boulder Colorado, where Kornfield then taught (Silberman, 2010). Kornfield was also personally instructed to be an observer of his own mind, in order to really know his mind. This is wise advice for any counselor. To be effective as a counselor, it is important to know yourself. Kornfield decided that this approach of a sustained investigation into one's mind was pragmatic and approachable. He added to it a psychology component to help westerners deal with any issues that might arise such as self-loathing (intrinsic to the west) and then built his insight meditation on this foundation (Silberman, 2010).

Silberman indicates that at Spirit Rock the need for the counseling became even more apparent as psychotherapists, senior teachers, and medical professionals who attended there found that past traumatic experience would arise in their meditation, and although they used the issues as part of their individual practice, guidance and counseling was needed to help them process their experiences as well. Kornfield believes that the use of psychology with insight meditation creates a viable form of counseling that is accessible and effective (Silberman, 2010).

Kornfield was able to work with his own suffering that arose in meditation. Issues from his childhood were tackled with insight and sand play therapy. His therapy was informed by the Tibetan Buddhism tradition of sand mandalas (Silberman, 2010).

Tibetan Lamas and monks create these intricate pieces of art for meditation and healing and for generating wisdom and compassion (Tibetan Healing Mandalas). The monks chant and meditate during the construction. When the mandalas are completed, they are released into moving water, a meditation on impermanence (Tibetan Healing Mandalas).

Criticism that has been leveled at Kornfield about Insight Meditation is that it is an “airy-fairy California style boomer Buddhism” (Silberman, 2010, p. 89). He’s responded by creating a dharma center for intensive study and training which is producing new teachers for dharma centers in both the US as well as Europe (Silberman, 2010). He wisely has included and encouraged the next group of young teachers. These teachers can be the future for meditation and the hybrid of insight and counseling. Kornfield hopes as well that this may be one way to keep the Buddha's teachings in our world (Silberman, 2010).

Tibetan Buddhism, Psychology and Culture

Buddhist teachings and its concepts are deeply imbedded in the Tibetan culture. So much so that before the Chinese invasion in the late 1940’s the entire daily life of the people of Tibet revolved around living the teachings and practices of their Tibetan Buddhism. (Osho, 2000). It was a country dedicated to the intention of realizing their minds (Osho, 2000). Historically, Buddhism spread throughout the Asian world, taking on the flavors of each country that it reached. In Tibet, Vajrayana Buddhism is the dominant practice in Tibet (Rinpoche, 1998). Tibetan Buddhism’s meeting with North American culture is now creating a dynamic interface, frequently characterized by disagreement as the two cultures hold different perspectives of how Tibetan Buddhism should be practiced in North America. The literature in this section discusses some of the key concerns of the meeting of these two cultures and its potential influence on counseling for those who choose to utilize a Tibetan Buddhist perspective in their work.

The teachings of the Buddha address the areas that can exist in counseling: compassion, impermanence, and suffering. It also presents the remedies such as

meditation and mindfulness and the recognition of our interdependence with one another (Vassos, 2010). It can be argued that we are fortunate to have the embodiment of compassion, the 14th Dalai Lama, leader in exile of the Tibetan people (Vassos, 2010). He has chosen to be in the world rather than apart from it. He has become the spiritual leader not only for his own people but also for other Tibetan Buddhist practitioners globally. It could be easily argued that in counseling which also has compassion as a cornerstone, he is a role model of compassion in action.

Young-Eisendrath (2008), a professor of psychology at the University of Vermont, unites both counseling and Buddhism. She points out that Buddhism informs and supports her conventional practice as well as her personal Buddhist practice. The advantage is that she feels she has more insight and less pessimism about the human condition. Unfortunately, she did not initially believe that she could share her therapeutic choices because of the cultural bias in the west: it was seen as an esoteric religion, rather than as mind training. Her concern was altered when the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet, became a high profile Tibetan Buddhist role model. The Dalai Lama's intellectual interest in neuroscientific and cognitive research paved the way for a more open attitude of mutual exploration between the cultures (Young-Eisendrath, 2008). In her article she explores suffering, one of the First Noble Truths in the Buddha's teachings. Young-Eisendrath (2008) examines the idea that our separateness creates an "object-subject reality" (p.548). This duality is one of the causes of our suffering, as we do not feel connected to one another. She asserts that although Buddhist emphasis is on the collective suffering of all beings, Buddhism and counseling both address the suffering each person has with the intention to alleviate the conditions and causes. Young-

Eisendrath notes that when we see the truth of our interdependence as well as the truth of impermanence, than we are set on the road to freedom from samsara (suffering).

Michalon (2001) suggests immediately, that the west and Tibetan Buddhism are well into their collision with one another. He sees that the influence is apparent now in psychology and in medicine and hopes for collaboration in spite of their different cultural perceptions of one another. He notes that the approach of the Buddha's teachings is analytical. The teachings encourage people to thoroughly examine their perceptions and analyze what they see as it arises from their minds (Michalon, 2001). The Buddha indicates in his Four Noble truths, a foundational teaching, that we suffer because of our misperception of reality driven by our senses. Michaelon asserts that in the west, it is the ego, which keeps us in distress as we equate success and personal value with a strong sense of self and our individuality. Through meditation, the recognition of the impermanence of all things, the recognition of no separateness from others and the development of wisdom and compassion, we can ultimately reduce our suffering by breaking this wheel of dissatisfaction or samsara. A gain that is pointed out is Tibetan Buddhism's ability to explore no self and interdependence, which can radically shift our western egocentricity to an alternate place of recognition of our interdependent connection with each other. This would decrease the angst that comes from a feeling of separateness.

Michaelon (2001) also advises caution when applying these principles when dealing with psychosis and points out that this is where a collaborative approach would be most useful. If in meditation, suppressed feelings arise that are overwhelming, then a therapist, particularly one trained in meditation could be both a guide and a counselor through this

process. Michalon indicates that there is a need for caution when dealing with people's egos and vulnerability, particularly when they have experienced oppression. Dismantling a fragile ego under those circumstances without rigorous support could do more in the way of harm. He also argues that middle age is a good time for self-exploration and a dismantling of the ego during therapy or meditation, since at that phase in life we are more naturally inclined to be aware of impermanence and our connection to the collective (Michalon, 2001). His final words are to remember to do as the Buddha taught and analyze your mind and trust your own observations and experiences (Michalon, 2001).

Feminist Therapy, Theory and Tibetan Buddhism

The focus of these articles is the meeting of Buddhist culture and the feminist perspective of the west. Feminist therapy theory addresses inequities that can occur in psychology when it does not address or recognize the needs or experiences intrinsic to each collective of people (Barret, Chin, Comas-Diaz, Espin, Green & McGoldrick, 2005). In this particular situation, there is both the dominant white culture of the west as well as the culturally imbedded patriarchal hierarchy in Tibetan Buddhism (Gross, 2005). In the feminist perspective it is important to assess for cultural bias by either one of these factors. Whatever theory a counselor chooses to use will also inform a counselor's point of view. This might include a counselor's perception of what's normal, as well as inform which collaborative direction the counselor and client decide for therapy (Leong, Altmaier & Johnson, 2008). It could be argued that as more women therapists bring meditation and Buddhist practices into their work, the more important a feminist perspective is to promote awareness of any power imbalances or oppression from either culture (Leong et al., 2008) This, it can be argued, promotes a healthier therapeutic

relationship. The five women in these articles grapple with the issues that have arisen because of the meeting of the two cultures and the ensuing impact on western female Buddhist practitioners.

Bell hooks, a Feminist writer and scholar, addresses racism and the negative perceptions of black women that arise from her own western culture as well as from other cultures (Burke, 2004). Hooks (1996) argues that as a black female, she is not given the same privileges or regard that the dominant white middle class seems to enjoy in terms of being a Tibetan Buddhist practitioner. She asserts that three perspectives are necessary in order to question these biases. First she believes that a spiritual practice cannot grow in the matrix of patriarchy and that this matrix must be questioned to avoid any racism or bias. Secondly, reading and understanding the Buddha's teachings is critical, particularly in regards to the duality of mind and working to understand ego, since these are often remedies for much of our problem thinking. She also sees these teachings as a way to transcendence or Buddha mind and recommends the path be one of contemplation and meditative reflection (hooks, 1996).

Pema Chodron is a Western Tibetan Buddhist nun ordained in 1974 and is the resident teacher at Gampo Abbey in Nova Scotia, the first monastery for westerner practitioners (Pema, 2008). Although she acknowledges some of the challenges present in the meeting of the two cultures, she holds in her writing that serious practice is a way to upend two of our worst mind poisons, hatred and aggression. She indicates that the problem may be in one's perceptions due to the duality in our thinking (Chodron, 1996). Chodron puts forward the idea that Buddhism and psychotherapy can work together as both address suffering and both work with deeply entrenched habits that keep us steeped in our own

confusion and unhappiness. However, she also clearly argues that Buddhism can't become western psychotherapy as it would lose the "vast mind" that Buddhism has to offer (Chodron, 1996, p.301).

Tsultrim Allione, another well-educated practitioner and one of the first western Tibetan Buddhist nuns, was ordained in 1970 by the 16th Karmapa (Allione, 2008). She was a nun for 4 four years before choosing a life as a mother and teacher, embracing the feminine in her Buddhist teachings (Allione, 2008). She also founded a retreat center in Colorado dedicated to Tara, the feminine deity of compassion (Allione, 2008). Allione is very clear in her observations of the gender biases in Tibetan Buddhism. She argues that it is a hierarchical, patriarchal system where nuns are treated in an inferior position and there is an inequality between monks and nuns in terms of who might receive teachings first (Allione, 1996). She looks through a feminist eye at the devaluation of women through language and sexist attitudes and the potentially negative impact on a practitioner's path in the west (Allione, 1996). As a remedy, Tsultrim advocates to women in the west to observe themselves and their lives, and make time for retreats for their practice. She also brings alive the mother concept which is the ground of emptiness in which the world of phenomena is born (Allione, 1996). This aligns with women as primordial beings that bring life into the world. She follows the lineage of Machig Labdron from Bhutan, a powerful 11th century female master of the Chod lineage in Tibet. Like Machig Labdron, Tsultrim brings the teachings to women all over the world through this positive interconnection, and brings traditional teachings and the west together (Allione, 2008).

Venerable Thubten Chodron, a western Buddhist nun and teacher, advocates for the monastic way of life in the western world (Chodron, 1996). She points out that a critical job that monasteries do is keeping the teachings for not only present practitioners but more importantly for keeping the teachings and the model of monastic life for the next generations of practitioners that follow (Chodron, 1996). She also does not support the cultural bias of Tibetan Buddhism, which is based in a society in which men have more privileges and regard and therefore better access to education and training in the monastery (Chodron, 1996). She believes that the west should reflect on this so that women are not undervalued in both cultures. She also challenges people in the west to be aware of their own tendency to “and compete and compare” (Chodron, 1996, p. 232) and suggests that all issues be folded into the path and the teachings (dharma).

Kate Wheeler (2006), a Buddhist teacher and writer, indicates in her work that it is important to recognize that the eastern culture which Tibetan Buddhism is from is a “medieval defended and hierarchal” society and that some of the difficulties between the cultures can be better navigated by western lamas who are more adept because of exposure to both (p. 57). She advocates for modernizing some of the traditions, which is being done now as the Asian culture meets western culture (Wheeler, 2006).

One man who has spoken out on these issues as well is Jack Kornfield. Silberman (2010) describes how Kornfield has folded the teachings of Vipassana, insight meditation, into a vehicle more accessible to westerners. Kornfield has pushed to get rid of the exclusive and sexist language used, particularly when texts are translated into English (Silberman, 2010). He has also set up meetings between Buddhist women teachers and

practitioners in the west with the Dalai Lama to initiate dialogue for change (Silberman, 2010).

Feminist therapy theory addresses the inequities of power that can happen in Tibetan Buddhism and western society and how that might affect a Tibetan Buddhist practitioner, both in their practice and in any counseling informed by Tibetan Buddhism trainings (Leong et al., 2008). Through their books, lectures and dharma teachings, hooks, P. Chodron, Allione, T. Chodron and Wheeler remove the inequities of power and access. These writers suggest that although people in the west are hungry for ways to understand themselves and the Buddha's teachings have much to bring to counseling, such as meditations for exploring and calming the mind, cultural concerns can present themselves as possible obstacles. It is arguably a challenging situation to have connection to both worlds and to hold several cultural perspectives at once. Belle hooks (1996) and the other writers have looked at several issues of importance such as racism and gender bias. However it is noteworthy that in the meeting of western and Tibetan Buddhist thought, these women writers ultimately advocate for the discipline of the dharma and the pursuit of a practice for training and knowing your own mind. They have looked at issues that could either impede or support them along the path of embracing the Buddha's teachings, and through their writings they have tried to impart the wisdom and experience, which can inform counselors that embrace both worlds as well as any western women practicing Tibetan Buddhism.

The Renegade

Stephen Batchelor is a self-declared agnostic and atheist and former Tibetan Buddhist monk, who wrote two provocative books, "Buddhism without Beliefs: A Contemporary

Guide to Awakening”(1998), and “Confessions of a Buddhist Atheist” (2010). Batchelor would like to pare down Tibetan Buddhism to its absolute essentials and dispose of any culture or dogma that he considers contentious such as karma and reincarnation (The Orlando Sentinel, 2000, June 10). He asserts that the Four Noble Truths and mindfulness are elements that should be preserved, but that everything else is a waste of time (The Orlando Sentinel, 2000). He is interested in simplifying practices so that they are not so overwhelming and more attainable for those who choose to follow a less mystical path (Vernon, 2010). He believes that the Buddha’s teachings are not a religion but a way to train the mind through meditation, and that the purpose of this training is to lessen our suffering and to become more compassionate and ethical (Vernon, 2010). However, a note-worthy discrepancy in Batchelor’s idea of simplification is expressed in the notion held by “the humanist movement in the US” which has grabbed hold of Batchelor’s ideas but has conceded that there is also a need for “community and ritual” (Vernon, 2010, p. 7). This suggestion to add back an element that has existed from the beginning of Buddhism is certainly ironic. Sangha, as a community of fellow practitioners, has always been an important component in the culture and traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. The Orlando Sentinel, in declaring that Batchelor is demystifying Buddhism for people and removing any dogmatic concepts for the purpose of better accessibility to meditation, clearly is arguing a reductionist and colonizing point a view when it disavows the importance of culture and its contributions. Rotondi (2010) discusses in his article that Batchelor wants a more secular perspective for Buddhism, something Batchelor refers to as “existential, therapeutic and liberating agnosticism” with meditation and mindfulness as the cornerstones (Rotondi, 2010). He expresses concern about Batchelor’s translation

of Buddhist texts and even questions whether they are done to serve his own purposes (Rotondi, 2010). From a counseling perspective, it is a curious use of the word therapeutic. Batchelor does not explain how being an atheist or an agnostic lends to an effective counseling situation. It could be argued that it is difficult to see what the therapeutic aspects of Batchelor's point of view are, as expressed in his writings.

The disagreement around these issues became quite heated when B. Alan Wallace wrote an open letter to Stephen Batchelor in *Mandala Magazine* in 2010. Wallace argues that Batchelor's assertions about the Buddha's teachings are not well examined or researched and that he is trying to "reshape who the Buddha was and what he taught into his own images" (Wallace, 2010). Wallace explains that Batchelor's views ignore the fact that great efforts and care have been used through multiple generations of traditional Buddhists and Tibetan Buddhists to maintain and "preserve" information about the Buddha and his teachings (Wallace, 2010). In turn, Batchelor fired back a letter to Wallace in *Mandala Magazine*, the next year, indicating that there was a need for a "reformation" as he doesn't believe there should be any adherence to any belief or doctrines (Batchelor, 2011). He also asserts that when he spent time in Korea in Zen training, that the concept of rebirth was irrelevant (Batchelor, 2011). The Buddhist Geeks is a website developed in 1997 for on-line discussion about Buddhist related issues for modern practitioners. Hunter (2010), one of the on-line writers, discussed Batchelor's assertions about the need to remove traditions and metaphysics from western Buddhist practice. He argues that concepts like rebirth and karma are difficult to accept because today's world is currently defined by a materialistic and scientific view. Hunter notes the dismissive attitude towards the Tibetan Buddhist culture and its relevance and suggests

that Batchelor is asking people to review Tibetan Buddhism from a newer Western perspective, which is more linear, skeptical and scientific. This supports Batchelor's view for reformation. However, Hunter (2010) also points out that given the large amount of Buddhist texts, Batchelor leaves out many other sources in his assertions about rebirth.

Clearly, it is important to not fall into the straight jacket of any one point of view. The potential reason for a counselor to look at these opposing points of view is to be well informed if they choose to bring Tibetan Buddhist ideas or meditation into their practice as it can be argued that there is a rambunctious and sometimes contentious meeting at the interface between Tibetan Buddhism and western thought. As noted by Khentse (2007), whose words could be applicable to counseling as well, "...keep in mind that as a Buddhist, you have a mission to refrain as much as possible from harming others, and to help others as much as possible" (p. 124). Khentse (2007) asserts also that if you reflect and meditate on the Buddha's Four Noble truths, "all these deeds flow naturally" (p. 124). In other words, taking the Buddha's teachings to heart can create the circumstances for greater compassion and ultimate enlightenment individually and collectively. It is difficult to have any argument against reducing suffering.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The interface between Tibetan Buddhism and western counseling and psychology, as revealed by the literature, presents a complex and challenging situation. As previously mentioned, although the invasion of Tibet by China oppressed and suppressed the Tibetan people and their Buddhism, the result of this event has been the seeding and germinating of Tibetan Buddhism worldwide, particularly in the west. Additionally, the migration of Tibetan teachers and masters to the west has increased people's interest in

mediation and the teachings. It also captured the curiosity of western researchers in the area of meditation and its effects on the brain, especially with long-term practitioners. This paper has discussed how, largely on the strength of the Dalai Lama's own intellectual interest, doors have been opened to research, and his monks have been allowed to be involved in studies using PET scans and MRI scans, to produce images of the brain during meditation. As discussed, the efforts of individuals like Jon Kabat-Zinn with his Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction and Jack Kornfield and his Insight meditation have made meditation accessible to people in the west who do not want the cultural traditions. Therapies such as CBT's next wave of mindfulness based counseling hybrids have benefited clients, as indicated by the success of Dialectical Behavior Therapy with borderline personality disorders. As a result of these efforts, counselors can now train in mindfulness-based meditation for their work. Nonetheless, traditionalists like B. Alan Wallace have also interjected a note of concern, as discussed. He supports the research but not at the expense of trivializing and sacrificing the culture in which the Tibetan Buddhist teachings are deeply imbedded. He has taken issue with Stephan Batchelor's attacks on the traditions and his minimalist approach to Tibetan Buddhism. There has also been important input from Feminist therapists and practitioners, and from Tibetan Buddhist nuns who have stated their own perspectives about both cultures. Their concerns have been for equality and greater accessibility to the traditional trainings in Tibetan Buddhism.

The future of the two is already unfolding. Many Tibetan Buddhist masters have created centers in the west. These are places for teachings, study and retreats watched over by qualified teachers. The new, young Tibetan Buddhist teachers are like many

young people today, Internet savvy and able to be in both worlds. Presently, one can go on-line for teachings, for finding information about teachers' whereabouts and converse with fellow members. As a result of the hard work of translators such as B. Alan Wallace, Tibetan Buddhist texts have been translated into English as well as other languages. The Dalai Lama, one of the best ambassadors for Tibetan Buddhism, also supports the translations of the texts so that they are not lost. Counselors interested in a deeper understanding about individual and collective suffering can bring a Tibetan Buddhist perspective and meditation into their work because of the greater access to both literature and teachers. The interest in neuro-plasticity of the brain will most likely continue to fuel empirical research into the effects of mindfulness based meditation, which will hopefully benefit counselors in the fields of mental health. The use of counselors during meditation retreats, as suggested by Jack Kornfield, would promote mutual support and benefit. As mentioned, he has already recognized this need and his Insight group has started training counselors in both areas.

However, there are cautions. The loss of many Tibetan masters means that we lose the direct connection through their lineage to the Buddha's words and teachings. B. Alan Wallace and other traditionally trained teachers therefore advocate for actually spending time and sitting with teachers and masters. The lack of well-trained teachers and realized masters could cause the degradation of Tibetan Buddhism in the west. Learning to meditate properly is crucial and needs the support of qualified teachers and these realized masters.

Future literature reviews could explore the contributions that young and educated Tibetan Buddhist practitioners and teachers from both Asia and the west are making to

the interface. Many counselors now are also Buddhist practitioners. A study on the effects of their Buddhism on their practices and clients would be advisable. The reviews could cover bilingualism and how it is making teachings and mind trainings from Tibetan teachers more accessible. Another area for investigation could be the effect of the Internet and the gains and losses associated with that. Many teachings are done on the Internet now and many traditional Tibetan Buddhist teachers have web sites. Is anything being lost by a lack of direct contact with your actual teacher, or does this keep students in greater touch as teachers have busy global teaching schedules? In counseling, it is the relationship that is the cornerstone.

Most importantly, who will benefit the most from this interface? One of the basic precepts of Buddhism is to cause no harm to any sentient being. Another intrinsic concept in Tibetan Buddhism meditation and mind training is that realizing one's own mind is not just for one's self but is to be for the benefit and enlightenment of all beings. It would be tragic to lose this perspective.



Figure 1. D.Sipress. Retrieved: December 1, 2011, from http://www.google.ca/search?q=david+sipress&hl=en&prmd=imvnso&tbn=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=NgFIT631JqTiQKT7aWiDw&sqi=2&ved=0CC0QsAQ&biw=1280&bih=603#q=david+sipress&hl=en&sa=X&tbn=isch&prmd=imvnso&bav=on.2,or.r_gc.r_pw.,cf.osb&fp=8b8ac5688e8defa1&biw=960&bih=493

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