ABSTRACT

BHUTANESE COUNSELORS' EXPERIENCES WITH WESTERN COUNSELING: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Susan V. Lester
Old Dominion University, 2015
Director: Dr. Radha J. Horton-Parker

Following centuries of independence from the rest of the world, the remote and fast-developing Kingdom of Bhutan has recently opened its doors to outside influence. Bhutan has invited the profession of counseling to aid in responding to growing mental health problems, social and family issues, and school and career guidance needs. This study employed the methods of phenomenology to investigate the experiences of Bhutanese counselors with Western counseling in order to understand the intersection of the culture of Bhutan with the culture of counseling. Eleven participants were interviewed and four themes were identified: Conceptualization of counseling, Bhutanese culture, Bhutanese counseling, and the relationship between Western counseling and Bhutan. The worldview differences between collectivism and individualism are highlighted as well as the compatibility and integration of Buddhist principles with counseling. Elements of a potential model of Bhutanese counseling are suggested as well as recommendations for counselor training, ongoing Western contributions, and the further development of the profession.