

Medium Corporation Series

Ask Dr. Robertson 1—Counselling and Psychology



Scott Douglas Jacobsen

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Image Credit: Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson.

By Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson is a Registered Doctoral Psychologist with expertise in Counselling Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Human Resource Development. He earned qualifications in Social Work too.

His research interests include memes as applied to self-knowledge, the evolution of religion and spirituality, the aboriginal self's structure, residential school syndrome, prior learning recognition and assessment, and the treatment of attention deficit disorder and suicide ideation.

In addition, he works in anxiety and trauma, addictions, and psycho-educational assessment, and relationship, family, and group counseling. Here we talk about the psychotherapy, and standard terms and definitions.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: You have multiple degrees, undergraduate and graduate level. Most oriented within counseling and psychology. Let's start: what is the basis of counseling and psychological work in the treatment of and counseling with individual clients/patients?

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: Psychotherapy is concerned with the process of change at the level of the individual. If the discomfort a client feels is due to external events, that individual must still choose to respond to those events in some way. An element of free will is thus built into the core practice of the discipline. There is much evidence to indicate that we are not born with free will and that it is never entirely unencumbered. I have argued our mission is, in effect, to teach clients to be self-actualizing according to a mental model of what it means to be human - a being who is both volitional and social with the capacity to have objective beliefs while exercising internal consistency of thought. I have also argued that this idealized self with qualities of uniqueness, constancy, and volitionality is a product of cultural evolution. My research suggests that this "modern" self is cross-cultural.

Jacobsen: What are the standard terms and definitions for readers, now and into the future, to bear in mind throughout the series?

Robertson: The terms "counseling" and "psychotherapy" are often used interchangeably; however the former can be applied to anyone who gives advice or "counsel." "Psychotherapy" is a narrower term that refers to applied psychology, although it has also been appropriated by social workers and others who do not necessarily receive training specific to psychology. This term, at least within the field of psychology, does not generally refer to advice-giving but to self-change, that is, change to the self of the individual.

The Adlerians probably offer the cleanest distinction between the two terms. They begin by holding that neither mode involves advice giving. Therapy is what is done when a change to the structure of the self is required. Counseling assumes an intact self but that circumstances, such as environmental or societal constraints, require the development of problem solving and perception checking skills. In both modes of intervention, counseling and psychotherapy, Adlerians would refrain from giving advice but would invite the client to select a plan from a variety of co-constructed possibilities.

Another term that requires clarification is "theory." Largely based on a misreading of Thomas Kuhn, psychology has misappropriated the term from the hard sciences, and what are called theories in psychology are really schools of practice. As Korhonen

brilliantly argued in her dissertation research, these schools, along with the counselling of Inuit elders, and the practice of multicultural psychotherapy share the same basic assumptions as to the structure of the self, and these assumptions include the importance of individual choice, the understanding of client difference, and the importance of context. These assumptions constitute a unified theory of what it means to be human.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Dr. Robertson.