

Psychology in the Snow



Reflections on Mental Wellness in the North

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson

&

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

In-Sight Publishing

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In honour of my friend Elder Albert Scott of the Kinistin Saulteaux who taught me much and gave me the painting reproduced on the front cover.

Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson

To Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson for the expertise, integrity, patience, professionalism, and collaboration, and the late Pete Jacobsen for everything.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Introduction by Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson

In 1998 then editor Scott Boyes agreed to publish a regular column in *The Northerner*, a weekly newspaper published out of La Ronge in northern Saskatchewan. Over the next seven years I submitted 90 columns on psychology. Then, in 2018 Scott Douglas Jacobsen approached me asking if I would agree to a series of interviews for *In-Sight Publishing's* "Question Time" on counselling psychology. He did his research. Some of the questions he asked were about more recent articles published in peer-reviewed journals; but many of the questions were based on my newspaper column published twenty years previously! I quite enjoyed updating, elaborating, and revising my previous opinions on such topics as the purpose of psychotherapy, science and psychology, residential school syndrome, the aboriginal self, building rapport, mind-body dualism, male stigma, victim culture, and grieving. The eighteen interviews we completed are re-published in this book. Three of those interviews include my daughter who was a child when the original columns were published but is now a psychologist in private practice in Edmonton, Alberta. Life is grand.

Scott also completed three interviews on transsexuality with Vancouver lawyer Carey Linde and me in 2020; and, these interviews are also included in this work. Transsexuality is based on the idea that sex is real and that people born into one sex may wish to transition to the other. Transgender ideology, on the other hand, holds that sex is a social construct and that infants are assigned a sex at their birth. The notion that men can give birth, that people with penises can compete in women's sports, and that men convicted of gendered crimes such as rape can be subsequently placed in women's prisons flow from this notion that sex is not a fact but a social construct. While humanism is based on freedom of speech, those who adhere to transgender ideology and related practices such as critical race theory and cancel culture, eschew all such discussion. The second section of this book consists of four articles dealing with this phenomenon I call Woke Identitarianism because it is based on personal identification with a number of approved victim groups.

The first article, *Requiem for a Discussion Page* is based on my experience as a moderator for an open humanist discussion group that had more than 2,000 members. This article recounts how militant Wokists, who could not tolerate respectful discussion of issues like tearing down statues and whether safe spaces for women should be protected, eventually succeeded in shutting the group down.

The second article deals with the larger ideology of critical and queer "theories" that denies the Enlightenment embrace of science, reason, and compassion upon which our civilization is based. *Year of the Virus* is my attempt to understand this self-defeating phenomenon using a psychological definition of what constitutes a mind virus.

My thesis is that mind viruses evolved from pieces of culture and that there are several sources that contributed to the 21st Century Woke Identitarian phenomenon. While much has been written on the sources of Woke Identitarianism, the contribution of "health food" and "alternative medicine" has been neglected. The third article in this compendium, *Retro-evolution in food and health care and its impact on modern culture*, deals the New Age Movement's contribution to this 21st Century anti-intellectual movement.

Like the Mormons of the 19th Century, the New Agers of the 20th romanticized people aboriginal to North America. Some have become shamans and pipe carriers in a westernized version of Aboriginal Spirituality with one, Charles Storm, inventing the modern medicine wheel consisting of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual quadrants. In 2003 psychologist Steven Pinker noted that a new quasi-religion had evolved based on the myths of the noble savage, blank slate, ghost in the machine. The blank slate holds that our thoughts can be shaped through "politically correct" language. The

ghost in the machine myth holds that we are born with an essence that decides, for example, whether we are transgender. The noble savage myth adds the view that indigenous ways of knowing are superior to “white”: or “western” ways. Humanism which includes our ideas of the universality of human rights is based on the Enlightenment which, in turn, has been called “a white, male way of knowing.” The last article in this book deals with the question *Is humanism compatible with indigeneity?* My answer is what you might expect from a psychologist, “It depends...”:

I would like to thank Scott both for his hard work as an interviewer and editor, but also for his inspiration in suggesting this project. I would also like to thank my fellow New Enlightenment Project board member, George Hewson for suggesting the title “Psychology in the Snow.” I would like to think that we are developing a psychology that is indigenous to Canada, different from that of the American Psychological Association.

Kind regards,

Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson

January, 2024

Introduction by Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Let me start with this: I did not expect this collaboration or the project. Even though, they're my fault. I tend to fart around a lot with a wide smattering of projects, topics, themes, personas. I find them fun. I remain a playful and experimental person, even as I get older. Maybe, especially as I get older, it seems like deep temperament. Something to plumb. I enjoy reading authors who exist as kin to Kurt Vonnegut. A survivor of war: so trauma survivor - a funny writer. A physical sensation of pleasure to read the architecture of the written word by authors like him. Perhaps, that roots the element of play with me. As the late and prominent American humanist Isaac Asimov purportedly said, "The most exciting phrase to hear in science, the one that heralds new discoveries, is not 'Eureka!' but 'That's funny...'"

Atheists, agnostics, brights, freethinkers, humanists, satanists, *und so weiter*, I, often, get a sense of whimsy about a life so short in community with them, because the so short life must take a whimsy sense given its brevity. My matrix or meta-premises of orientations about the world, myself, and the relation between the two, sits somewhere between the superset of these. A common thread with the superset comes from the presence of humour and use of empirical means to grasp elements of the world. The religious discourse, on the other hand, tends towards the asinine, the boring, the cruel, the dogmatic, the dreary, the dull, the dumb, the erred, and - no doubt - the faithful. Words in some sense seem ineffective in the display of overwhelming wonder present to generations of humanity with nothing but religious iconography, tales, and text to guide them. A sincere and naive wonder bound by ignorance without a method to know deeper functional and pragmatic truths about the universe. A "Eureka" followed by silence. Science gave the "that's funny" response to the "Eureka" reverberating through the human animal in response to Nature.

Psychology as a purported claimant to scientific status appears late in the empirical game in the 1870s with Wilhelm Wundt. An empiricism beginning in the contemporary centuries, maybe, in the 1500s. Modern science garners respect for functional truths about the world, pragmatic truths about the world. These functional truths represent operationalism. These pragmatic truths represent practical application. The latter following from the former. To represent operations of Nature means the possibility for practical application on Nature, thus, we come to the basic sciences: biology, chemistry, physics, and mathematics, with the development of technologies following from these fields of inquiry. The greater the magnitude of complex systems, then the more difficult the discovery of deeper truths about those systems. Human information processing remains a great problem to solve, potentially a mystery. Regardless, as an evolved production of Nature and the unitary nature of Nature, the functional truths about Nature apply to us. In theory, psychology can act as a scientific conduit to learn deeper truths about human information processing with the possibility for technological developments to modify it. Is that true, funny, or both?

Counselling psychology comes from psychology. Ideally, psychological investigation remains empirical: the "that's funny." Counselling psychology, naturally, follows this vein. The counselling psychology interviews with Dr. Robertson represent an educational series devoted to casual discussion of complex counselling psychology ideas and topics in relation to counselling psychology. As both humanists, the bias sits on this fulcrum: the "*und so weiter*" - my people. As a trauma survivor who did his work, life can be trauma. Counselling psychology becomes a necessity there. In the aforementioned sense, a technology, a tool, to modify human information processing for healthier living. The articles come as bonus materials to interested readers.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

December 28, 2023

Interviews

Ask Dr. Robertson 1 — Counselling and Psychology

December 14, 2018

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 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 counseling 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.

Ask Dr. Robertson 2 – Psychotherapy

December 27, 2018

In some previous interviews for the Athabasca University student magazine, *The Voice Magazine*, Robertson, and I discussed some of the background and work of Robertson in addition to some material on psychotherapy and then some of the prominent figures within it.

We continued to discuss the definition of psychotherapy, especially what the therapeutic process involves for the individual student too. To Robertson, as a certified and qualified, and highly intelligent, practitioner, described psychotherapy as a process – no mention as to the specific speed – of effectuating change in the individual who voluntarily enters into a relationship with the patient or client (and vice versa), this implies a lot, and requires significant unpacking.

“The change is psychological in that it is intended to impact positively on the client’s cognitive and emotional functioning. The therapist acts as a facilitator of such change in keeping with the client’s goals. There is a consensus across the schools of psychotherapy that the therapeutic process is not advice giving,” Robertson stated, “To give advice is to presume that the advice-giver knows the client better than the client does. To give advice is disempowering because, if the advice works, it leaves the client dependent on the advice-giver the next time there is a problem.”

The central purpose of the psychotherapeutic methodology is for the development of the individual, as a client or patient, who is seen as a person of worth and volition. There are differences between schools of thought in psychotherapy.

Some incorporate advice giving. Others do not, and, instead, focus on the issue of solving problems. Thus, we come to the general field of the practice known as psychotherapy and then the individuated schools of thought within psychotherapy. Still more, some will mix and match the terminology of psychotherapy and counseling together, which was covered, in brief, in the first of this series.

Two of the main thinkers known to the public are Freud and Jung. Both, according to Robertson, brought attention to the phylogenetic factors within the work of studying the human psyche, in the broadest terms possible. Bearing in mind, of course, the two of them did not have the advanced technological means for comprehension of the physical structure of the organ producing the mind at the time.

It seems akin to the ancient Greeks with the Milesian school, and others, where we can see tremendous amounts of metaphysics without much physics; this created a number of issues in theorization about the bottom rung of the world in terms of magnitude and constituents. They talked about the *Apeiron* or the infinite, water, and air. But they did not have the physics to get at the fundamental notion of a basic structure and set of constituents of the universe.

It may have been cognitive limits. It may have been philosophical conceptual limits. At the same time, certainly, it was a limit in the ways of knowing the world through their tools. These individuals and societies had a limitation in their ability to know the world around them, in a natural sense. But they had lots of fancy thoughts about it: sophisticated, intuitive, and, wrong, metaphysics.

Robertson continued on Freud and Jung, “By suggesting that archetypes are encoded, instinctive, preconfigured patterns of action, Jung was, in effect, taking a deterministic stance. Similarly, in

Freud's tripartite division the poor ego is left frantically balancing the instinctual drives of the id with the dictatorial culturally determined superego. Although I am not a determinist, I count the recognition of genetic and environmental constraints as an important contribution. I think Freud's greatest contribution is that he popularized the idea that psychology is a science."

Robertson considered another important contribution of Freud the bringing out of the closet – so to speak – the limitations on the sexuality of the Victorian era. He thinks Freud got the notion of penis envy wrong. Alfred Adler described how women can be envious of men in the early 20th century, not because of penis envy but, because of a great deal of social inequality.

"Jung's conceptualization of archetypes from which we create meaning has application to cultural and self-studies, but he dabbled in mysticism and his notion that there exists a collective unconscious has bolstered the beliefs of some religionists. This can have dangerous consequences," Robertson cautioned.

According to Robertson, Jung claimed the so-called Aryan race was somehow rooted in the land; whereas, the Jewish peoples were a rootless people – nomadic almost, or even in actuality. This belief contributed to the awful rise of Nazism that led to all sorts of horrors and catastrophes. Jung looked at the ideas of Freud and Adler as okay for the Jewish peoples, but claimed his psychology was more suitable for the German "Volk."

The conversation went into figures of similar notoriety but, unfortunately, without more public recognition within the general consciousness. Robertson's opinion is that Adler never received, even to the present day, sufficient recognition for contributions to the intellectual life of the psychologists in the history of psychology and right into the present.

Robertson also mentioned Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers in terms of leading the charge of Humanist Psychotherapy. Duly note, Robertson is the Vice-President of Humanist Canada. This may be biased, but, certainly, not an unjustified or uninformed opinion.

Intriguingly, he described how, in fact, Adler was given insufficient recognition by these two giants – Maslow and Rogers – of Humanistic Psychotherapy, especially with Adler as a precursor to their ideas and theories. The concepts of self-actualization and client-centered therapy, in particular.

Adler concluded, on self-actualization, that this is – in the words of Adler – a "striving for perfection." Indeed, he provided a basis an anticipatory psychological basis, or psychotherapeutic foundation – of sorts, for the client centered therapy with the declaration of "the patient or client was expert in his or her self with psychotherapy defined as a collaboration between experts," Robertson stated.

Adler set foot within behaviorism, too. He had, apparently, "homework assignments" intended for the reinforcement and reshaping of the behavior of clients or patients. However, Robertson speculated that, perhaps, the behaviorists of the time may have been irked, maybe, with the notion of mankind having consciousness and freedom of the will of some form. Any form – compatibilist, incompatibilist, and so on – freedom of the will becomes a problem for the fundamental substructure of the theories of behaviorists.

In this manner, Robertson proposed, rather naturally, the anticipation, once more of another field, of Cognitive-Behaviorism. Albert Ellis, who founded Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (these are all the biggest theories and methodologies, even in the current period), credited Adler with an influence on the development of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy. His basic aim

was the recognition or suggestion of clients as they went about revision of their worldviews. Meaning-making is a modern view of human beings. We evolved to make meaning in the world. This is a view of some or many modern psychotherapists.

Robertson concluded, “Today we have a plethora of schools of psychological practice with the founders of each emphasizing some feature or technique that makes their school distinctive. I argued in https://www.hawkeyeassociates.ca/images/pdf/academic/Free_Will.pdf that these schools are united by a theory of human potentiality and that the project of psychotherapy is to teach people to reach the potential implied by that theory. I think Adler tapped into this vision of what it means to be human over a century ago and he addressed it holistically.”

Ask Dr. Robertson 3—Social and Psychological Sciences Gone Wrong

January 24, 2019

The interview started on the issue of when the sciences, in general, go wrong. Robertson's answer was simply "all the time," in terms of a preliminary answer. Remarking, of course, that proper care in observation, attention to detail, and precision are part and parcel of the scientific process, where, even with imperfections in observation, the proper perspective is that science is tentative, provisional, and perpetually incomplete.

"Therefore, scientists will always acknowledge that their knowledge claims are provisional, dependent on further evidence. This is why, in modern science, replication and peer review are so important in identifying any biases that may have affected interpretations placed on research," Robertson explained, "You may have been referring to Thomas Kuhn with respect to the second part of your question on hidden premises. Kuhn said that for a discipline to become a science it had to be united by a paradigm which he defined as a body of intertwined theoretical and methodological belief."

Way back in the 1970s, there was a declaration that psychology exists as something like a proto-science, an inchoate science, or, perhaps, in some ways, pre-scientific in the modern sense. The reason for this is the incompleteness of the world explained by the scientific processes adhered to, within psychology. It does not have the unifying framework of plate tectonics and continental drift linked to gradualism within geological sciences, evolution by natural selection in biological sciences, the germ theory of disease in medical sciences, Quantum Mechanics and General & Special Relativity of modern physics with – at least – standard Big Bang cosmogony, the Table of Elements of Mendeleev for chemistry, the information theoretic and communication theoretic foundation in the modern world of mass communications and information technologies – including Moore's Law for decades, and so on.

Psychology remains an epistemologically and, therefore, almost entirely, ontologically disjunct endeavor. Some will state freedom of the will, consciousness, and qualia – or the traits of experience (e.g., some may of have heard the oft-said and always-now boring phrase, "The redness of red," akin to the phrase "extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence" of the late astrophysicist Dr. Carl Sagan and variations found in Simone LaPlace, David Hume, and Marcello Truzzi) – as base level problems in psychology without clear solutions. Part of the lack of clarity is the lack of a unified theory, or paradigm rather, in psychology.

Robertson stated, "A quarter of a century later Pat Duffy Hutcheon examined three possible paradigmatic formulations in psychology — the psychoanalysis of Freud, the developmentalism of Piaget, and the classical behaviorism of Skinner — and she found all had failed to establish themselves as the dominant paradigm in psychology for various reasons. I believe that since then a fourth paradigm has implicitly taken root in the field and that is the subject of the final chapter in a book I am writing about the evolution of the self. That paradigm is based on our self-definition as a species that includes ourselves as discreet, relatively stable, volitional, reflective, and rational beings."

The title of the upcoming book was not given within the context of the interview. However, we can look forward to updates on it. But if we look into the furtherance of the conversation between Robertson and I, the former paradigm of psychotherapy – probably within some remnants floating around in their community – was the cognitivist paradigm. This paradigm was,

simply put, a reaction to behaviorism's limitations in a lack of a coherent explanation of the internal operations of the mind for a simple reason: behaviorists just rejected serious attempts at explications of the inside mechanics of the human mind from early life to late life and death.

“At this time results within the field of psychotherapy are overwhelmingly interpreted from this cognitivist paradigm. Consistently obtained scientific results that cannot be understood within this paradigm would force a scientific revolution replacing this paradigm with another more inclusive one,” Robertson explained, “I suppose you could say the research and interpretations of findings are ‘poisoned’ by the assumptions built into the more primitive paradigm. The classical example of this would be the pre-Copernican notion that Earth was the center of the universe. Using this paradigm, the planets exhibited complicated orbits around Earth, sometime speeding up or slowing down, performing strange loops and so on until the paradigm shifted placing our sun in the center of the solar system.”

In some interesting **writing** on freedom of the will, Robertson made an argument for an emergent psychological paradigm within the studies of the mind with volition and rational choice as fundamental in the species-wide self-definition. Some, in response, see this as a construct of individualism while, also, poisoning individuals against what some deem collectivism. He does not share this critique, but views this as, at root, an academic debate for the time.

Robertson considers the public not seeing the slow, incomplete progress of science and, in particular, its own correcting methodology built into itself. Science does not create knowledge or assert wisdom as in the case of various ideologies and religions, but, instead, harbors a tentativeness without an assumption of absolute knowledge.

“An example of this would be the attack on the theory of evolution by people who want to believe Earth is only 6,000 years old. A second example would be people who believe environmental scientists are part of a great conspiracy to fake evidence related to global warming. A third example would be people who wish to think that evidence debunking notions that our minds are a “blank slate” when we are born are part of a patriarchal backlash,” Robertson stated.

He recalled an interview with the late Dr. Carl Sagan, of *Cosmos* fame, and the Dalai Lama, of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism. In it, the Dalai Lama stated that if there was an impossibility of reincarnation, then the belief in reincarnation within Buddhism would need to alter to the more accurate scientific view at that time. Robertson considered this an important aspect of remaining tentative in conclusions so as not to be servants of belief systems, whatever the source.

Within the contexts of the Canadian story, the narrative of Canada, we come to the issues of dark patches – long ones – in the historical record with the Residential School system or the residential schools and the associated problems of enforcement of one religious culture with the sanction of the government, and then the abuse, the intergenerational impacts of the abuse, the imposition of a bureaucratic developmental model rather than a community development model, and the needs of the community being ignored for long periods of time – right into the present.

Robertson, in reflection on work as the Director of Health and Social Development for the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations in the 1980s, stated, “...many chiefs repeated the refrain that they had been ‘studied to death.’ They were, of course, not claiming that they had been physically harmed. They were claiming that there had been numerous studies and they had

not seen any positive results. In some cases, studies were conducted but the results were not communicated back to the communities in question. I believe that knowledge should be ‘open access’ and shared between all stakeholders.”

Robertson then made a distinction and transitioned into a conversation on the ways in which the psychological knowledge acquired has been utilized in the past and in the current period with the emergent fourth paradigm. For example, while the Director of Health and Social Development, a band education authority hired a psychometrician for a reserve in northern Saskatchewan. The psychometrician was Albertan and from Edmonton in particular.

This Edmontonian psychometrician tested the intelligence of the elementary pupils on the reserve, where 60% of those students were labeled mentally handicapped or were found to be mentally handicapped based on the results of the psychometric testing. Robertson noted the cultural bias in intelligence testing. In fact, Robertson knows the northern Saskatchewan community from the testing.

“...I can tell you that the psychometrician must not have followed test protocol with respect to testing children whose second language is English and who come from cultural traditions do not favor speeded, timed tests. At first, the band education committee was happy with these results as they received considerable extra funding for special needs children,” Robertson explained, “But this was, in my opinion, a false economy with a negative impact. You see, educational programming for mentally handicapped is quite different from what was needed.”

Robertson in further reflection on former professional capacities as the Director of Life Skills for the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. He described how he educated students from a variety of remote communities in the forms of habits and skills required for academic success. The program added one year to the university education of the students, but the initiative with the adaptations was incredibly successful.” Robertson found an important part of the educational process where the education in cross-cultural skills necessary for academic success, especially in the context of modern industrialized society and the global economy.

The conversation moved to a closing section on the alleviation of the impacts of RSS or residential school syndrome. Robertson separated the task of scientists to study the natural world and then the work for the greater good. In this sense, science is good for knowledge about the world. The question about a greater good is another question, which can mean those in power – the “power-brokers” – can abuse their influence and control and, in fact, limit research into things, including climate change – as happened in Canada under the leadership of former Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper.

“Decisions by authorities on what constitutes the greater good are often ideologically based. That being said, research into ways to alleviate human suffering interests me, and as you have alluded, residential school syndrome has been one of my interests. As a kid who stayed with the families of friends on reserve in the 60s, I knew something about the dark history of Indian residential schools,” Robertson stated, “So, I was surprised when chiefs in Saskatchewan commissioned me, along with my colleague Perry Redman, to do research into keeping one of these schools open after they had been closed elsewhere in the country.”

The world is complex and rarely black and white. In this gray example, Robertson was hired as a youth suicide prevention expert, as a school psychologist, in a different Indian Residential School. Under Amerindian administration, the school remained open. Robertson continued to

explain how he was “commissioned” by Indian Child and Family Services in Lac La Ronge in order to have a better look at the students in “one of the last remaining residential schools in the country.”

Robertson stated, “Then, at the turn of the millennium, I accepted a contract with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation to provide psychological support to various projects aimed at alleviating the effects of residential schools in northern Saskatchewan. I have published articles on residential school syndrome and the related concept of historic trauma.”

RSS has been identified as one form of PTSD or post-traumatic stress disorder affecting some minority of individuals who have attended the residential schools in Canada. The symptomatology includes “extreme rage, lack of emotional connection with one [who] has children, and aggressive alcohol and drug abuse in addition to those symptoms that are normally associated with PTSD.”

In the work of Robertson, which has its own noble underpinning, in my opinion, includes a combination of CBT or Cognitive Behaviour Therapy – probably one of the most common and widely used forms of therapy – alongside Narrative Therapy. The purpose is to use a form of traditional Aboriginal storytelling as one way in which to construct meaning. One view in the psychological community is that human beings are meaning-making beings. Narrative Therapy follows in this tradition.

Robertson emphasized the import of individualization of the treatment for the clients, as in an individual assessment and treatment per client or patient. He described how some have had benefits from the practices and learning experiences about Turtle Island or “North American” Aboriginal traditions and spirituality and, in turn, ways of looking at the world. In **an article** by Robertson, he noted how some elders felt the attempted introduction of Aboriginal Spirituality, by the band health administration, is somewhat or simply oppressive.

“A concern I have is the tendency of some to essentialize and universalize experience. One woman approached me worried that she might be ‘in denial.’ She had good memories of her residential school experience and was leading a happy and productive life, but the negative media reports about these schools had led her to question her remembered experiences,” Robertson concluded, “Not all residential schools were the same and not all students at such schools suffered or witnessed abuse. Even worse, in my opinion, is the concept of historic trauma, where a whole race of people is said to suffer from a psychological condition irrespective of when, where and under what conditions colonization occurred. In my mind, undo psychologising is destructive of peoples’ mental health.”

Ask Dr. Robertson 4 — Just You and Me, One-on-One Counselling

January 28, 2019

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: When working with clients or patients one-on-one, how do you build rapport and trust with them? I imagine, on a one-on-one basis, difficulty in working with them without rapport or, especially, trust.

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: Numerous studies have found that client-counsellor rapport accounts for up to 50% of the variance in therapeutic outcomes, and this has led some psychologists to conclude that the methodological school of psychology one practises is not important. What the data actually shows is that without rapport the client is less likely to experience positive outcomes regardless of methods used, but that still allows for the possibility that some practices are more efficacious than others for particular issues.

Probably the easiest way to build rapport is to identify commonalities between therapist and client. This could include gender, race, ethnicity, religion, social status, and so on. Once the client has revealed the problem or issue that has brought him or her to therapy, the therapist may share that he has faced a similar issue, and this too has the effect of establishing rapport, but there are risks associated with this approach.

The first such danger is that it can undermine the therapeutic process. As discussed in an earlier conversation, psychotherapy is predicated on the notion that each of us is a unique self-determining individuals. By over emphasizing our external commonalities, we run the risk of denying that self-empowering process. The clearest example I can think of occurred when I was Director of Mental Health for Northern Saskatchewan. Concerned with the lack of effectiveness of its alcohol and drug addiction program, the province brought its addiction program under the authority of the mental health program. I discovered that addictions workers had been hired, not on the basis of their competence in psychotherapy, but on the basis of their status as “recovered” alcoholics. These workers had maintained sobriety for years, and they thought they could use their own experience as a template for others. They gave advice based on their own experiences and they thought they were doing therapy. Such an approach denies the individual experiences and cognitions of the client.

A second danger of establishing rapport through the development of a common identity is that it could confirm a dysfunctional worldview. Psychotherapy is about change. If a man comes to me having been abused by women, and I reveal to him that I also have been abused by women, then we could commiserate and blame while avoiding dealing with the changes the man will need to make to have healthy transsexual relationships. Similarly, Feminist Psychotherapy adds an ideological perspective to the field and that perspective could keep female clients from undergoing beneficial self-change.

I am not discounting using therapist and client commonalities in building rapport, I am just cognisant of some of the risks that need to be monitored while taking such an approach. There is another way of building the therapeutic alliance. Adler viewed the client or patient as an expert in himself and therapy as a collaboration between two experts. Another way of picturing this approach is to view the therapist as a kind of consultant. The client identifies the issues he or she wishes to tackle, and I offer alternative therapies the client may use to reach agreed upon goals. We then co-construct a treatment plan. Treatment then is in part experimentation to see which approaches are most effective in this situation given the unique attributes the client possesses. In

the process, the client learns self-monitoring and self-assessment skills that can be applicable in other situations.

Jacobsen: What are you bearing in mind in this working environment, in one-on-one counseling? How do you gauge individual needs and project possible timelines of the patients?

Robertson: In most cases, the client comes to me with an issue or issues on which they wish to work. We don't necessarily stay with the same issue. In one example, the client came to me with the complaint that she was too sensitive to criticism. Following a couple of sessions, it became apparent that she was the recipient of emotional abuse, so this shifted the strategies we used. In another case, the client came to me with problems maintaining attention, but it became apparent that the reason she had difficulty focusing was depression. Such changes in focus involve a re-negotiation of treatment planning. I like to project a certain number of sessions in which to incorporate a treatment plan with the idea that at the end of those sessions we, that is the client and I, evaluate the achievements obtained. This could result in terminating our sessions, continuing with the present treatment plan, or negotiating a new plan.

Jacobsen: How do you work to prevent the possible transference of trauma to the counsellor or reactivity of the counselor in case they or you may have had prior similar negative life experiences? For example, a male counselor who witnessed abuse of one parent by another in youth, and then hears a recounting of a client's experience with this. This may work them up.

Robertson: Hopefully the counsellor has dealt with his or her related traumas before they attempt to help someone who has had a similar traumatic experience. If the counsellor has not successfully dealt with that trauma then he or she should not accept such clients. On the other hand, if the counsellor has successfully dealt with a similar event, that counsellor may be able to offer unique helpful insights. The person who experiences a trauma is not necessarily forever wounded by it.

The issue of transference was first noted by Freud who viewed the client or patient's attribution of emotions and motivations to the therapist as an opportunity to generate positive insight. I think what you might be concerned with is the issue of countertransference where the therapist takes on the emotions of the client. The counsellor or therapist has a special relationship with the client involving a kind of intimacy. Karl Rogers called this therapeutic stance unconditional positive regard. Alfred Adler said you have to get into the client's skin to see the world through his eyes. The danger here is that the therapist may so identify with the client that he takes on aspects of their worldview and trauma. This, of course, does not do anyone any good. The therapist is conducting a cognitive exercise in monitoring the client's cognitions, emotions, and behaviour. By maintaining this cognitive distance from the client's emotions and behaviour, the therapist is actually modelling those skills the client will need to gain control of problematic emotionally laden behaviours. Some people equate cognitive distance as a lack of empathy, but this is a misunderstanding of the concept. The therapist practicing cognitive distancing is empathetic enough to understand that the client, to gain control of his or her emotions and behaviours, must be able to sufficiently objectify them to understand them and thereby gain control.

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

Ask Dr. Robertson 5 — Self-Actualization, Boys, and Young Males: Solution:Problem::Hammer:Nail

February 11, 2019

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Famously, so famous, in fact, as to become a common phrase indicative of common sense wisdom — which, as one may joke about ‘common sense,’ may be uncommon sometimes and other times not-so-wise, the late Abraham Maslow, American Psychologist, remarked on the existence of problems and tools to solve them:

I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail.

Dr. Philip Zimbardo, Professor Emeritus at Stanford University, and others — including Dr. Warren Farrell, who speaks in a pace and tone so as not to offend even the fly on the wall, for content reasons, obviously — continue to focus on some overlooked issues for males, young males and boys in particular; where as a collective, interrelated culture, these become issues for us, too. Maslow constructed the hierarchy of needs in the 1943 paper entitled *A Theory of Human Motivation*.

Zimbardo, who specializes in the psychology of evil (Stanford Prison Experiment in experiment and Abu Ghraib in reality, though this experiment came under more critical scrutiny, recently) and time perspective (e.g., living, mentally speaking, in the past, the present, or future), spoke on young men and boys since the early 2010s right into the present.

In particular, Zimbardo spoke on the failure of some boys and young men in multiple domains of life, where mainstream cultures — multinationally speaking — demand certain levels of performance and expect achievement of specific milestones by culturally affirmed ages for social approval. If not, then cue the epithets and societal reproval.

It is not an all-or-nothing evaluation, but it is a change in the ratio of the boys and young men succeeding compared to previous generations on average — and, especially, in contrast to the wonderful rise of girls and women. It becomes a dual-facet phenomenon of decline for boys and young men and incline for girls and young women with higher-order analysis implications, in time and in persistence of culture in bounded geography. Zimbardo reflected on the failures, by his estimation, as indicative of a hijacking or hacking of the hierarchy of needs by pornography, video games, and fatherlessness/(male-)mentorlessness — in part.

That is to say, with the self-fulfillment and psychological needs removed from the hierarchy of needs or ignored by the boys and young men, this left, at least, pornography, video games, and mentorlessness as central pillars in the decline of self-actualization and psychological needs, in boys and young men.

In the end, Zimbardo argues the result becomes a context in which young men and boys find themselves fulfilled as purely safety-and-physiological-needs-based beings, while also creating, in his research and assertions, i.e., not formally accepted by the academic psychological community in the DSM-5, “arousal addictions”: a psychological mode of a move towards pleasure and drift, or shift, away from pain in every life dynamic with a

consistent need for novelty, which is an addiction for similar hyperstimuli with perpetual novelty, e.g., pornography and video games, as opposed to the same hyperstimuli, e.g., cocaine and gambling.

Of course, as a side remark, Dr. Leonard Sax, M.D., Ph.D., American Psychologist and Physician, describes endocrine disruptors and educational system changes as additional factors in this.

No planning, no contingencies, no notions of the future, no orientation towards larger life goals, and little or no incentive to move out of this hedonistic, presentist mental state. Did Maslow predict this psychological orientation of young men and boys? If so, how? Did anyone (else)?

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: Your pre-ambles certainly covers a lot of ground, Scott! The short answer as to whether Maslow predicted the current psychological orientation of young men and boys is “no.” He was interested in individual as opposed to collective psychological development. On the other hand, his hierarchy of needs may be applied to such developments.

There is a lot of evidence that males in modern Euro-American cultures are not doing well. Males, on average, die younger. Male unemployment is increasing with large numbers of younger males considered virtually unemployable, yet 97% of workplace deaths are men. Seventy percent of graduates in Canadian universities are women. Male suicide rates are four times that of women. Men are more likely to suffer from addictions, be incarcerated and be victims of violent crime. Eighty percent of homeless are men. Things have gotten worse for men since ex-feminist Warren Farrell wrote his book two and a half decades ago. From a Maslow hierarchy of needs perspective, things have not been going well, and part of that can be attributed to the influence of feminism.

Sax, whom you also referenced, in a brilliant analysis of kindergarten curricula in the United States, said that the curricula had been changed in preceding decades to conform to girl’s normative development. Specifically, he said that kindergartens had come to emphasize verbal skills which developmentally favour girls at that age. Had kindergartens emphasized spatial skills then boys would have been favoured. The result of this gynocentric curricula is that boys are more likely to experience frustration in their early schools, like school less, and more frequently experience failure. If female normative development and behaviour is set as normative across society, then boys and men will be disadvantaged. But that is only part of the story.

Using qualitative methods, I was able to demonstrate that a diverse sample of Canadian men have experienced harsh stigma as a result of their sex. Stigma is the imputation of characteristics to a class of people that renders them unfit for certain social roles. The men were viewed as a threat to others or irresponsible with respect to family responsibilities simply because they were men. As a result, they were judged as unfit, or less fit, in their roles as parents or as employees in specific occupations despite a lack of evidence of any wrongdoing. We see this stigma in society with notions of “toxic masculinity” where guilt does not have to be proven, it is assumed. Thus, even when men overcome disadvantages built into education, they remain at a disadvantage. The alienation of fathers from their families, in large part because of stigma, compounds the problem because boys, raised by single parent mothers, are less likely to have effective role models matching their gender and they are more likely to experience addictions, incarceration and suicide.

So, as Zimbardo has argued, many young men are dropping out. They are not competing for careers. They are not establishing families. They are not contributing meaningfully to society. They are occupying themselves with short term gratification. Maslow argued that until self-esteem needs are met, people are more preoccupied with meeting those needs than pursuing self-actualization. If a group of people are disadvantaged in education and suffer stigma for being a member of their group, it could be expected that in accepting the dominant society's normative view, they suffer low genderized self-esteem. Zimbardo's famous prison experiment showed definitively that people tend to become the roles societies set for them. The scary implication of this is that many of these young men could become the "toxic masculine" stereotype feminists have set for them. But I think there is another way of looking at this.

About three decades before Maslow built his famous pyramid, Alfred Adler said that all humans are born with a "striving for perfection" which is similar to Maslow's idea of self-actualization. Those who give up this striving are people who are discouraged and this describes those young men who are dropping out. We need to combat society's message to boys that they are both bad and failures and we need to reintroduce the striving for goodness.

Robertson's article on Male Stigma can be found at:

https://www.hawkeyeassociates.ca/images/pdf/academic/Male_Stigma.pdf

Jacobsen: Following from the previous question, what therapeutic methods, in a professional setting — group and one-on-one, work with the young men and boys, who, by standard cultural expectations, continue to fail at, probably, increasing rates?

Robertson: In 2012 I attended a workshop on how to counsel men at a Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association annual convention. The presenters were both women one of whom asked, with wide eyed innocence, how many of the attendees, who were overwhelmingly women, had actually counselled a man. Fewer than half the workshop participants raised their hands. The workshop then proceeded with a review of statistics on how few men seek psychotherapy, how men experience depression and suicide ideation less but nonetheless commit suicide at higher rates, and how men sublimate their mental health needs through alcohol, anger, and violence. The prescription of the presenters was that men need to learn how to admit their failings and seek help; they need to be in touch with their feelings more and make themselves "vulnerable" by discussing those feelings; and they need to find allies and build support systems. In short, they need to become more like women.

The suggestions of these female facilitators are not totally wrong. Many men benefit from honing these skills; but I would argue that many women would benefit from learning skills in which men tend to more easily excel. The problem with the paradigm that was presented at this workshop is exactly the problem Sax found with gynocentric kindergarten curricula — it sets up female developmental experience as normative to which both sexes should aspire.

The dominant themes in psychotherapy have always been gyno-normative, even when most of the practitioners were male. For example, Freud's patients were all female (and rich females at that), and it was on his experience with them that he based his theories. It is probably no coincidence that the psychoanalysis he developed consists of symbolism, dream interpretation, random thoughts, free associations, and fantasies in a process that can take years. In contrast, the male approach is to define a problem and solve it. Sometimes this involves setting aside one's emotions so that rational processes are better able to take charge. My experience with men is that

they do not want to be in therapy for a long time. Albert Ellis' Rational Emotive Therapy makes sense for many men although women may equally benefit from this approach.

I don't mean to recapitulate John Grey's Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus thesis. A non-sexist psychotherapy will treat each person as a culture of one with the therapist setting out to learn that culture; however, we need to recognize that there are certain tendencies that may be culturally or genetically driven. Sexist psychotherapy occurs when the normative experience of one sex is set as the norm for both. For example, the presenters at the "How to Counsel Men" workshop I just cited were mystified as to how it was that men were far more likely to commit suicide than women but were far less likely to suffer from depression. It did not occur to them that the American Psychological Association defines depression using the female normative experience. Male symptoms that differ from the female expression are not recognized, and I submit this is one reason why men are under diagnosed with this condition.

It is not at all clear that men's mental health needs will receive serious attention any time soon. The APA Guidelines for the Psychological Practice with Men and Boys released last year, attempts to link traditional masculinity to racism, ageism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism, and this, we are told, results in "personal restriction, devaluation, or violation of others or self." The unsubstantiated suggestion is made that men commit higher levels of intimate partner violence and are estranged from their children because they lack the will or ability to have positive involvement in healthy family relationships. Psychologists are cautioned about believing their male clients who protest their innocence because, in the words of the APA, "Male privilege tends to be invisible to men."

I think we should consider the possibility that men do not seek counselling or therapy because they do not see counsellors and therapists as sympathetic to their experiences and the APA guidelines fail to dispel this perception. This should not be seen as an indictment against all therapists. Jordan Peterson's "Twelve Steps" are based on practices that are common to Rational Emotive and Cognitive Behavioural therapies, and he expressed surprise that his approach has been overwhelmingly endorsed by young men because those approaches are gender neutral. I think his experience demonstrates that men are willing to seek help for their mental health issues if the helpers are seen to be sympathetic to their lived experience.

My advice to men who are interested in psychotherapy is to interview a number of psychotherapists before settling on one. Ensure that the therapist you choose is sympathetic to your needs and has an approach with which you feel comfortable. I think most therapists would feel comfortable answering such questions, and if they do not, you do not want to use the services of that therapist.

Jacobsen: Recalling a remark by Sax, he noted, after the age of 30, no reliable intervention — inasmuch as his research and professional practice work are concerned — for the aforementioned failure, in terms of steerage back onto the high seas of normal cultural life. He states, according to recent research on the architecture of the brain, an adult female is aged 22 and an adult male is aged 30.

Robertson: Neuropsychology is not my field; however this sounds like an old idea that girls mature faster than boys. I will rely on Susan Harter on this who did a meta-analysis and concluded that the frontal lobes normally complete their development around age 25 for both sexes. She published this in her 2012 book, and there may be subsequent research of which I am not aware. On the other hand, Sax is on solid ground in contending that there are inherited sex-

linked differences with respect to personalities, drives and certain aptitudes although it should be remembered that when discussing such differences we are talking about averages and that knowing a person's sex will not reliably tell us anything about any individual person's personality or aptitudes. In any case, we are not born with a blank slate as Steven Pinker classically articulated in his book of that name, and on that point I think Sax is on very solid ground scientifically.

The 1950s and 60s popular notion that girls mature faster than boys was grounded in a number of observations that included girls verbal and social development, and the fact that young women were often ready to settle down and raise a family by their late teens. Young men, on the other hand, were often more interested in things than people and would rather explore and experiment than settle down and raise a family. The related conclusions regarding maturity was again grounded in a gynonormative perspective. We now know that different lifestyles and experiences can affect the brain's structure such that male curiosity, if allowed expression, will result in a strengthening of relevant parts of the brain. Neo-natal scarcity can also lead to phenotypical gene expression that may be adaptive in a world of grinding poverty but are maladaptive in the modern context. Sax may have been thinking of this research in putting limits on when profitable interventions may be undertaken. Recent research has debunked the idea that the brain loses all plasticity by age 30, and in any case, I have helped many adults past middle age to lead satisfying lives after having had a career of dysfunctionality.

Jacobsen: Looking at the last two questions, if we look at the short, medium, and long term futures of men and, thus, in part, societies, what will be the outcomes for those who begin to succeed, and those who continue to fail, by the standard cultural expectations in Canada? What will be the outcomes for the Canadian culture if the trends lean towards further failure or further success — as defined before? For example, Sax reflects on the work by Professor David D. Gilmore, Professor of Anthropology at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, with the likely dissipation and replacement, as an assessment and not a judgment of Gilmore, of secular English-speaking culture in North America, and, in fact, elsewhere, because of the lack of strong bonds across generations and the current cultures with young men and boys on one failure, and girls and young women on another standard success, trajectory, where these sub-cultures in larger Canadian society will not reproduce themselves for a variety of reasons and, therefore, will undergo steady replacement by other sub-cultures enacting the behavioral, communal, familial, and mating patterns indicative of those who have endured in previous generations for millennia, e.g., the Navajo, the Chinese, the Jewish, and so on.

Robertson: Again, there is a lot packed into your question. I would predict that some men will continue to succeed and they will assume the position of alpha males. I predict that large numbers of men will continue to fail, in part due to societal structures that lead to this result, and in part due to their own state of personal anomy flowing from a breakdown in the intergenerational transmission of values. I would argue, however, that reproduction below replacement levels is occurring worldwide and cannot be attributed solely or even primarily to events unique to Euro-American cultures but seem to be correlated with higher levels of educational opportunity available to women that allow for alternate avenues to self-actualization besides the mother archetype. I don't think a low birth rate is necessarily a bad thing, but I am concerned about male roles in this new culture.

With the words “alpha male” my mind went immediately to the Canadian prime minister who may or may not be prototypical. Alpha males operate by different rules than are available to ordinary males. Feminists in Trudeau’s cabinet like Chrystia Freeland and Jane Philpott gave Mr. Trudeau a pass on substantiated allegations of a past sexual assault while applauding the expulsion from the Liberal caucus backbench members who faced unproven allegations of sexual assault. This would be an example of how rules between classes of men differ in the new society. The problems men who are not alpha face are either invisible or ignored. Even though three times as many male aboriginal men are missing or murdered as compared to aboriginal women, a Canadian inquiry into the problem excluded consideration of the men. When the government announced that Syrian refugees would be admitted, single males were specifically excluded from refugee status. When foreign aid increases were announced, agencies receiving the aid had to agree that none of it would go to men. I do not think the majority of men can expect much consideration from such feminized alpha males.

One problem faced by the majority of men is we do not normally confide in and support other men. I have been part of that problem. In 1969 I marched with Women’s Liberation to protest the “Saskatoon Club.” This was a club for well-to-do men in the city of Saskatoon. Men got to relax, play pool, discuss business and politics, and enter into mentoring relationships without the perceived distraction of women. We succeeded in opening it up to women. About three years later a succession of women rose at a meeting of Women’s Liberation to state that there were women present who felt intimidated by the presence of men. They politely asked the men present, who numbered about a quarter of the group, to leave, and we did so without protest. The result is that there was no net gain in inter-sex cooperation. The difference involved a shifting of gender specific networking and mentoring capacity. Ordinary men to this day remain largely unorganized.

The lack positive male self-identity can be traced to an intergenerational fail in the transmission of values. This fail began long before the advent of feminism. With the Industrial revolution men were forced to work in factories for 12 to 16 hours per day six days per week. Men became absentee parents whose contribution to the family was largely as a “good provider.” Mothers raised their children but necessarily gave them a woman’s perspective. This division of labour became a cultural norm, maintained long after working hours were reduced. Most men still measured their self-worth by their ability to be that good provider for their families differing to women in matters of child-rearing. But now, if men work hard and achieve financial success they are told that they are the recipients of unearned male privilege. Some men are saying, “Why bother?” I think the appeal of people like Peterson is that he has given them a reason to bother that transcends current ideological constraints, and that reason has to do with the development of personal integrity. In a sense, he is reaching out intergenerationally, filling a need in building positive male identities, as I also hope to do in this interview. Thank you for the opportunity.

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

Ask Dr. Robertson 6 — It's All About Me, Me, Meme, and the Self: From First Nations to Second Nations, Building Third Culture Counselling

March 19, 2019

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Let's start with memes and the self in relation to the Aboriginal self this session, please. **The self** is a cognitive structure and, thus, in part, **a cultural construct**. It also links to memes.

A meme is **described** as “an elemental unit of culture that exhibits referent, connotative, affective and behavioural properties. Connotation and affect were assumed to be the source of the attractive and repellent “forces” identified by Dawkins.

In addition, the self exists as non-static.[1] This view of the self as a dynamic whole within an environment is reflected in the **eco-maps idea** and cultural construction.[2] You have **described** one caveat of the self-stability as important as ourselves evolving through time, or the dynamism of the self, too.

Also, the self, as it has evolved, is **a reflective project**. As noted, there can be consistency in the memeplexes, and so the average self across selves, e.g., consistency in volition in spite of cultural repression in the case of Maomao. In a way, the self remains not entirely a cultural construct in this resistance to cultural repression.

You explain the **modern self** as follows, “The modern self may be understood as a self-referencing cognitive feedback loop having qualities of volition, distinctness, continuance, productivity, intimacy, social interest, and emotion.”

The self, as a referent point, simply seems non-trivial as a point of contact here. Adler stated the self is core in worldview. Obviously, this links worldview to culture, the cultural construction of the self, the average self across selves, the dynamic self-evolving through time, and, ultimately, the reflection in the structure and dynamics of the brain and so the mind.

Thus, these diverse points of contact centered on the self may be a means by which to help patients, as some work shown by you.

What other contexts provide explanation of the self and memes as further background — ignoring for the moment other work by Blackmore and others on technology and “memes”?

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: Thank you for that intricate summary of my work in this area Scott. I am not going to accept your suggestion that we ignore Blackmore for the moment, because I think that she offers a good starting point to understanding my contribution to self-studies. Briefly, she viewed the self to be an illusion created by complexes of memes infesting human bodies turning us into “meme machines.” Given that the self is not a material thing, but an entity consisting of units of culture that describes a relationship with one material human body, hers is not, at first glance, an unreasonable metaphor. But we cannot be the corporeal body Blackmore assumes us to be because such bodies, by themselves, lack self-awareness or consciousness, and we have both. In the alternative, we might be the memeplexes so visualized, but that leads to the image of ethereal bodies waiting to infest some unsuspecting dumb brute in

a kind of non-theistic dualism. From whence did such ethereal bodies come? The answer, of course, is that the memplexi had to come from the bodies to begin with, which means there could be no infestation, no take over, no dualism between the two. Our bodies and our minds co-evolved and the distinctions we make between the two are simplifications that may benefit our analysis in some ways but cannot completely or holistically describe the phenomena.

When did the first self-emerge? Well, I could say when the first ape-like creature recognized his reflection in a pool of water, but an argument could be made for millions of years earlier — when the first organism recoiled when penetrated by a foreign object. Of course, neither the ape nor the organism had a self we would recognize as such. The evolution of the self was aided by the invention of language that allowed for increasingly sophisticated conceptualizations, and equally important, a process whereby phonemes can be recombined to create new meanings — a process that is mimicked in the process of recombining memes in new and novel ways. The modern self with elements of uniqueness, volition, stability over time, and self-descriptors related to productivity, intimacy, and social interest, is one such recombination that proved to be such value that it was preserved in culture and taught to succeeding generations of children. This modern self-occurred as recently as 3,000 years ago, but had such survival value that it spread to all cultures.

When I use the term “modern self” it should not be confused with “modernity” which is said to have occurred with the European Enlightenment. Foucault mistook the ideology of individualism that flowed from the Enlightenment with self-construction in declaring the self to be a European invention. Let me explain. To engage in volitional cognitive planning each person must first situate themselves within a situational and temporal frame. Even when engaged in group planning, each individual must so situate themselves in determining their contribution to the group effort. The Europeans did not invent this. While the potential benefits to societies containing individuals who can perform forward planning are obvious, the individualism inherent in defining oneself to be unique, continuous, and volitional are potentially disruptive. I have argued that the rise of the great world religions was an effort to keep the individualism inherent in the modern self in check. Confucians sublimated the self to the family and tradition. Buddhists declared the self to be an illusion. Christians instructed the devout to give up their selves. Hindus controlled self-expression through an elaborate caste system. One of the accomplishments of the Enlightenment was to reverse the moral imperative. The individualism inherent in the self was now seen as a good and the enforced collectivism restricting the freedoms of the self, especially with regard to freedom of thought, was deemed to be oppressive. It is with this background early psychologists like Adler were able to declare the self to be central to a unique worldview.

Jacobsen: This can relate to Aboriginal peoples too, especially in the forced attempts at construction of new selves for the Aboriginal peoples in Canada with the sanction of both the churches — in general — and the government of Canada.

You stated, “The botched church-directed attempt to re-make the selves of aboriginal children led to the distinctive symptoms of Residential School Syndrome even in individuals who were not sexually or physically abused at school. Since the self both creates and is created by the surrounding culture...”

That links to the individual and cultural construction of the self in an Aboriginal mistreatment context. However, nuances exist here. The history remains gray rather than

black and white — so to speak. In “The Residential School Experience: Syndrome or Historic Trauma,” you state, “...the residential school experience traumatized a generation of children without the necessary pre-condition that each one experienced physical or sexual abuse.”

Robertson: If I can interject here, I was engaging in literary hyperbole in the last quote you correctly attributed to me. Not every residential school was the same during all periods in which they existed, and not every child who attended an Indian Residential School was traumatized. I have worked with a number of adults who report good experiences at such schools. Having said that, there are numerous examples of physical and sexual abuse, but that is not the whole story. The point I was making here is that the system itself was potentially traumatizing without the necessity of introducing those “life and death” causal factors necessary for a traditional diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

All trauma can be viewed as damaging to the self of the individual who experiences it. In the case of Residential School Syndrome, children were removed from their families and their communities for extended periods of time. The churches wanted to minimize familial influence that might negate their sacred mission to proselytize. Isolated individuals have difficulty maintaining their sense of self. In the residential school environment students would not have typically received such reinforcement for their self, except possibly from their peers. From the staff, these students were treated like different persons from who they were in their communities and this was in an environment where they were disempowered. The new self was often grafted on to the old self but often without a good fit, or in some cases, the old self was discarded entirely. If we were only talking about physical or sexual assault then a diagnosis of PTSD would be sufficient to understand the condition. Considerations of self-expand the range of recognized triggering events and expands the range of symptoms. It also introduces the possibility of intergenerational transmission.

Jacobsen: Also, you noted the possibility, as when Waldram reviewed the work of Manson (a study of U.S. high school students) and 8 other studies, of low rates of exhibited PTSD in Aboriginal peoples — because they simply have low rates of PTSD. In other words, it’s not everyone.

That is to say, there is a difference between the Aboriginal sub-populations who have and have not gone through Residential Schools, and differentials between individuals and people groups who went through the Residential School system. (All this skipping over issues of blood quantum and status, as described.)

Robertson: The mixing of “blood quantum” and culture invariably leads to racism, but for this discussion, we do not need to go there. At the time that I wrote the article to which you refer, the research on PTSD in aboriginal populations consistently showed lower rates of PTSD despite a higher proportion of potentially traumatizing incidents with survivors of residential schools in Canada being an exception. Since Waldram’s work, Brave Heart, who popularized the notion of “Historic Trauma,” has argued that PTSD in indigenous American populations is much higher than had been diagnosed, but this argument is based on the idea that high rates of alcoholism, domestic violence and crime are evidence of trauma. In my opinion, there are other possible reasons for such destructive activities.

Jacobsen: For example, there will be differences in the efficacy of methodologies between, **for example**, the Cree and the Blackfeet. It can be the same with different methodologies for men and women too.

As we discussed in the last session on pornography and video games and young men, described in the case of international students who were middle eastern men, you **explain**, “In the new, unmonitored environment, their post-secondary studies suffered because they spent several hours per day gaming and viewing pornographic websites.”

This may need a different intervention than with women who may be less likely to have these problems and different issues, if they do have them, manifesting with them, too.

One practical therapeutic example included a woman. You researched the construction of the map of the self, where the map of the self may help youth with the serious issue of suicidal ideation, as in **the case** of “Suzie,” alongside CBT and EMDR.[3]

However, males may respond in different ways. Therefore, different cultural groups and sexes & genders may require different methodologies. How can the ideas of memes and the self-incorporate into different therapeutic methodologies for different Aboriginal peoples — and for Aboriginal men and women?

Robertson: There is an assumption in your question that different methodologies are appropriate for different classes of people. I treat each client as a culture of one with that culture identified through exploration. Once the client’s personal culture is understood, or in the process of developing that understanding, we co-construct treatment plans based on the uniqueness that is inherent. When we talk about differences between the sexes, or between racial and ethnic groups, these differences are merely averages and cannot describe any one person within the group. Any attempt to define people by their membership to an ascribed identity ends up being oppressive. People must define themselves.

Jacobsen: Further on the issues of men and women, and Aboriginal peoples, you have **explained**, in part, how this church (and state) imposition impacts the ways in which PTSD-like or PTSD symptomatology can be passed through the generations. You have **described some** of the atrocious outcomes:

The churches’ plan to pay for school maintenance costs through the labour of the students was unsuccessful, and this resulted in cutbacks to diet and health care. A 1941 study found that half the children who entered residential schools prior to that date did not survive to adulthood.

This relates to the cultural construction of the self-passed through peoples with the trauma generated and delivered socioculturally down the generations. Also, as **you note**, ideological stances, such as some feminisms, may impute selves into men as a category, causing real-life havoc and lifelong damage.

This may become an issue or concern, or a reality, for many Indigenous peoples within the bounded geography of Canada, as they may be imputed, by the wider non-Aboriginal culture, with certain selves with damage to healthy senses of self. The aforementioned trauma, obviously, can impact the sense of self.

As noted in counselling services, the ethnicity and sexual orientation of the counsellor can influence who shows up, where, in a North American context, similar “ethnicity appeared to be more important to Amerindian than to Caucasian students...”

Dealing with aforementioned points of contact at the outset, for those Indigenous youth, or even older, affected with PTSD or PTSD symptomatology, could the storytelling and metaphors, e.g., the medicine wheel, help in the discovery of the newer healthier self, especially if done through an Amerindian counsellor as an example?

Robertson: My concern is not so much that people who are not aboriginal to North America would impute damaged selves to those who are, but that aboriginal people make the imputation to themselves. For example, when Waldram first suggested we consider that lower rates of PTSD have been diagnosed among Amerindian populations because they actually have lower rates of PTSD, there was a huge outcry, not from the non-indigenous populations, but from indigenous academics. These academics and others in the indigenous community believed that Waldram was minimizing the effects of colonialism, but this interpretation was a misreading of his work. His actually said that we should explore resiliency factors in aboriginal cultures that lead to a greater ability of members of those communities to cope with potentially traumatizing events, and I agree. We need to explore community strengths instead of focusing exclusively on weaknesses or past wrongs. Indeed, a focus on weakness can be damaging irrespective of the money and resources thrown at that weakness. Let me give an example.

Supposing there is a terrible death in a community and the grieving family invites me to help them with the grieving process. I let them know I will be right over. While they are assembled in the front room waiting for me, Aunt Mary arrives with a cake. We can all recognize that Aunt Mary is not there to show off her baking. She is there to provide comfort and support to the grieving family. Now, supposing instead of inviting Aunt Mary in, the family tell her they are waiting for this expert on grieving to arrive, and they ask her to come back later. What Aunt Mary has learned is that her approach, what she has to offer, is not good enough. She is less likely to offer her coping skills in the future and less likely to pass her skills on. One of the co-constructed community activities that we developed to combat high rates of youth suicide in Stanley Mission during the 1990s was to have elders teach the wilderness survival skills. These camps proved to be very popular with the males and therapeutic. When we asked the elders why they had not taught these skills to their grandchildren previously they replied that in this modern age they didn't think anyone would be interested.

The **storytelling tradition** runs deep in cultures indigenous to the Americas, and indeed, one of the ways we make sense of the world is to tell stories to ourselves. Usually, in these stories, we are either the protagonist or the story is told from our perspective. The first task is to gain an understanding of the meaning of the metaphors and images embedded in the story. Then I look for evidence of the protagonist overcoming great difficulty. If the self that is in evidence from these narratives does not evidence the ability to overcome obstacles, then that is an area of self-definition that needs to be addressed. Over time, the self-narrative will change to include empowered self-volition, and with that change the individual can assess their circumstance from new perspectives.

The medicine wheel concept offers the promise of understanding complex situations; however, the medicine wheel as is popularly used falls short of that ideal. If you believe that the medicine wheel is always divided into four and that the primary constituents of that fourplex include physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual then you have moved it from being a useful construct for understanding complexity to a simplistic dogma. In any case that medicine wheel is not particularly traditional. For one thing, there is no word for mental in the Algonquian family of languages, nor in any other indigenous language as far as I know. In Cree a word meaning "He is

crazy” is usually used much to the chagrin of mental health workers. Second mental disorders are usually inability to modulate, control or act on emotions so “mental” necessarily includes both cognitive and emotional functioning. Finally, and most tellingly, the wheel is not indigenous to Amerindian cultures. There has been a lot of cultural appropriation going on in the construction of the modern medicine wheel. There are hundreds of ancient stone circles stretching across the length of the Great Plains of North America that are too big or too intricate to be tepee rings, the stones that hold the flaps of a tepee down and are left when a camp moves. These ancient circles were divided in many ways and not always from the center like spokes in a wheel. Following that older tradition, I invite clients to construct their own personal medicine wheel using whatever symbolism that fits with their history and worldview.

Jacobsen: Herein, we have a deeper question about the necessity of the categories of the Aboriginal self and non-Aboriginal self, or, rather, the selves. The important part seems the development of a functional self in the first place.

As you **noted**, cultures evolve. Or, more quotable, “As culture is the collective expression of the people who constitute it, cultural evolution is tied to self-change.” Static assumptions do no one good here, described earlier; either at the individual or the collective levels.

Some examples of this include Indigenous Christianity exemplified by Dr. Terry LeBlanc, Dr. Raymond Aldred, the late Rev. Richard Twiss, and others. Cultures collide and third ones arise. You posed the **question**, “How many non-aboriginal memes can be incorporated into a self before it ceases to be aboriginal?”

Looking into the future, the First Nations cultures will remain. The Second Nations or settler-colonialist cultures will stay. Simultaneously, a third set of cultures will emerge from this history. What might be the next manifestation of a third culture?

Robertson: During the 1960s Anishinaabe Duke Redbird used to say that the truck is a very important part of Amerindian culture. “How do I know that?” he would rhetorically ask, only to answer “Because whenever I visit a reserve anywhere in Canada, there are old half tons and plenty of reserve mechanics who know how to keep them running.” I would add that the trucks are a lot newer these days.

It is not so much that Amerindian or First Nations cultures will remain as that they will continually be co-constructed and reconstituted by the members that identify with those cultures. Those reconstructions will inevitably involve cultural appropriation. The concept of nation as applied to Amerindian peoples in Canada is one such appropriation. The idea of the nation began with Joan of Arc who rallied people who spoke various dialects of French to oppose the British. Although French forces eventually repelled the British, the idea that the French were a nation that owed each other and the nation allegiance did not take root until the French Revolution and was exploited by Napoleon to almost conquer all of Europe. Arguably, however, the first nation occurred earlier in the form of the Dutch Republic. The Anishinaabe could be a nation if they defined themselves as such, and if they did they would organize something like an Anishinaabe national council. Irrespective of issues of sovereignty and self-government, a band that may consist of two or three extended families, is not the same thing as a nation so when the term “First Nation” is used at that level it represents a misappropriation. It seems that the term “First Nations” represents a conflation of “first peoples,” but even here we have waves of migration so that the descendants of the Clovis peoples would be arguably the first, the Dene the second and the Inuit the third.

Given the historical record your use of the term “Second Nations” is confusing. You may be referring to the formation of Canada led by John A. Macdonald. He attempted to form a nation out of British North America but in his attempt to assimilate French and English speakers into that nation he was extending the definition of the term. In any event, the experiment did not work as planned. Beginning with Rene Leveque, the Quebecois defined themselves as their own nation but English speaking Canadians have never defined themselves as an English speaking nation. All of this prompted Justin Trudeau to describe Canada as a post-national formulation in a New York Times interview. In Trudeau’s opinion, the Canadian nation no longer exists.

You asked about the emergence of a third culture, but that has already happened and is continuing to happen. Canadian culture has been evolving from a “mosaic” pattern distinctive from the U.S. American “melting pot.” It is descended from the fur trade and the mercantile system that distinguished British North America heavily influenced by geography, climate, and cultures that were indigenous to the land. It is also a culture that is descended from the European Enlightenment as well as its Christian traditions. It will continue to evolve as a negotiation between its peoples.

Jacobsen: As you imply, the objective world matters, as objective truth provides the basis for empirical models for comprehension of the natural world. However, the work with Indigenous or Aboriginal peoples with PTSD symptomatology can become a difficulty.

As you **explained**, “The scientific method developed as a way of reducing subjectivity in our quest for the objectively real. Rational thought is anathema to thought systems that propagate through non-rational means.”

How can healthy concepts of self and, with them, reliance on approximations of objective truth derive a basis for a third culture — secular and religious — more constructive and positive than destructive and negative of relations between the First Nations and Second Nations — so to speak — or the settler-colonialists and, in fact, a basis for different and innovative forms of treatments oriented with the context and conceptualizations of memes the self?

Robertson: First I would like to explain that I am not a post-modernist. I had a professor who said science is just a “white male way of knowing.” I countered that if this was true then accounts of colonialism are just a “Politicized Indian way of knowing.” For the very same reasons why I believe there exists an objective reality outside ourselves, I believe the holocaust and the colonization of the Americas occurs irrespective of the race, gender, or ethnic membership of the speaker. “His truth” or “her truth” is always trumped by “the truth.” It is our challenge to find what is true, and that is the mission of science.

Instinctively, we know this is true. Clients with very low self-esteem don’t change just because the therapist tells them they are worthy and capable. They change only when they see sufficient evidence that counters their low self-evaluation. It is not that they are afraid to believe in themselves, it is that they are afraid to believe in themselves falsely. They take a theory as to who they are and they keep to that theory until it is overwhelmed by evidence to the contrary. They are scientists.

Evidence that is based on blaming others is self-defeating because the act of blaming transfers one’s personal power to those who are blamed. A problem with victim culture is that it depends on redress from the more powerful with the result that it breeds perpetual dependency. PTSD is

characterized by a disempowered self-surrounded by a worldview that is hostile to the individual and unpredictable. The anecdote for both those with PTSD and those immersed in victim culture is to define oneself as capable of contributing to a secure future within a world that is mostly, but not always, supportive, and predictable. The positive self-esteem that results is then a result of one's own efforts within a social interest context.

Blaming or demeaning others is a cheap and ultimately ineffective way of building self-esteem. Let's deconstruct your use of the term "settler-colonialist." The 19th century Cree, after they defeated the Dene in most of what is now northern Saskatchewan, settled in the now vacated land building family trap lines and ultimately forming communities. Since they came from what is now northern Manitoba and settled in a land to which they had not previously occupied, they were settlers. But after a generation or two, their descendants could no longer be viewed as settlers because they were born in and were part of the land that was once Dene. The term "settler" only applies to the generation that settled. The notion that white people will always be settlers because of their race is, I think, racist. I am reminded of a political conversation I had with a group of people at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College back in the early 1980s. At one point a Cree woman who refused to acknowledge that she also had European genes loudly stated, "I wish all the whites went back to where they came from, and you Metis should go half way back." We all laughed. In those days we were not so sensitive to humour. But when you think about it, the idea that the Metis should drown in the North Atlantic is a racist idea, but at the time we knew she didn't really mean that. The fact is, the whites aren't going anywhere. Calling them "settlers" only breeds a perpetual sense of self-defeating disempowering victimization.

I notice that when the words aboriginal and settler are used in the same sentence, the word "aboriginal" is usually capitalized while the word "settler" is never capitalized. This is rather curious because both words are descriptive adjectives. Why would adjectives describing one people be treated differently than adjectives describing another? Now, in fact, in English adjectives that end in "al" are never capitalized, but in Canada we have recently ignored that convention. Perhaps we believe that by capitalizing the word aboriginal we will build the self-esteem of people who are aboriginal to this land. I think there are more meaningful ways of building self-esteem. As a person who identifies as aboriginal, I don't need to capitalize a self-referencing adjective to build my self-esteem.

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

[1] It is referenced in [other research](#) by Dr. Robertson, "...this understanding explains how the syndrome may be transferred intergenerationally. That being said, it would be a mistake to assume that all who went to residential school suffer from the associated syndrome or that therapeutic self-reconstruction can be done by PLAR facilitators."

[2] Interestingly, as a small point, the self can have implications for how one views the need for [weddings too](#). Dr. Robertson states, "It is postulated that marriage ceremonies have persisted among the non-religious due to needs to authenticate or recognize transitional changes to the self, but these needs have been met through ad hoc strategies as opposed to a uniform demand for humanist services."

[3] Ignoring the prior learning assessment, though intriguing, as this does not suit the needs of the educational series here, the work with Dianne Conrad repeats the other interesting points

about the need for integration into the models, of the practitioner of “self-development,” of a dynamism in other words.

Some interesting commentary, “The literature of higher education and adult learning has long recognised the value of providing adults with not only cognitive and workplace skills but also with tools for development in the affective — social and emotional — domains of learning.”

Some more intriguing commentary, “...the practice of recognising prior learning, as a means of credentialing and a form of validation, must be rigorously and ethically administered to ensure appropriate recognition of real achievement.” How does one keep the accurate conception of self-mapped to the notion of the “self”?

Ask Dr. Robertson (and Teela) 7 — Elate, Hawkeye on Roberts: A Happy Counselling Psychology Family Affair

April 2, 2019

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Let's start some of this within the context of a generational difference, for one, Lloyd and Teela, you come from different generations of counselling psychology. For two, you are a father and a daughter. You're family. Any points to make at the outset here?

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: Issues such as those involving gender diversity, transsexuality, changing male roles and multiple lifetime careers were, I think, normative markers for Teela's generation, and I consult with her regularly to avoid a feeling of being "stuck in the past." I have talked before in this series about treating every client as a culture of one and the process of exploring each person's unique culture has saved me from a lot of grief; however, it is good to know what the client is talking about. I consult with Teela regularly about new and changing perspectives, and newer communication patters by which those perspectives are transmitted. I think I bring a historical perspective to the table.

Teela Robertson, M.C.: *Given my dad raised me, I was influenced by his Adlerian approach, specifically regarding beliefs about human nature such as people are unique given their context, goal oriented, and capable of change. In my training I found myself automatically ascribing to an Adlerian framework which was pointed out by a professor early in my Masters. It was no surprise, but of course we typically try to differentiate from our parents. I agree my generation and particularly my personal experiences offered a different perspective for me to draw on when consulting with my dad. On the other side, my dad's range of professional experience and expertise is a platform for me to draw on as I continue to learn and develop my professional self.*

Jacobsen: Another difference, though not necessarily or at least, fully based on generations, is the private practice versus not for profit professional lives in the latter-2010s. Lloyd, you work through Hawkeye Associates, i.e., a private practice. Teela, you work with a not-for-profit agency.

Lloyd, how does private practice possibly provide more in-depth and intimate experiences with clients or patients in comparison to not for profit agencies? Teela, does a not for profit potentially give a more consistent and narrow range of possible issues and concerns of patients compared to a private practice clientele?

Lloyd: Although I have maintained a private practice under a registered business name since 1985, I have also worked for the provincial government, indigenous band governments, school boards and a community college. I have experience as a psychologist in each of those settings. While the private practise route allows the practitioner more flexibility in controlling his or her schedule, it also has some drawbacks. For example, if the client is a "no-show" normally the practitioner does not get paid for that missing hour; Further, most private practice work is funded through various plans each of which has their own limitations. For example, one Employee and Family Assistance Provider limits paid sessions to three every calendar year. Successful therapy usually takes longer than three sessions. Of course, there may also be limitations when employed as a psychologist by an agency. For example, the provincial mental health program had a policy that therapists were not to do marriage counselling or ability assessments. School boards often did not like their psychologists doing mental health work. In private practice, I could do it all.

Teela Robertson, M.C.: *Working in a community agency with accessible services that includes a sliding scale we see a wide range of client issues and concerns. Often this means clients who might otherwise only receive 3–5 sessions through insurance or employee assistance programs can continue therapy at a reduced rate. I am typically able to see my clients until we agree services are no longer required. Being in an agency there are some practice expectations to follow, however, at least in the agency I work there is a large amount of flexibility in terms of working with clients in our own style as opposed to having to conform to a specific modality or approach. What is somewhat unique although not exclusively, is that the agency I work for is faith-based and encourages us to take into consideration the client’s cultural and spiritual beliefs to the extent we are competent to, and the client wants us to. This is an area I believe my dad and I practice very similarly. In that we may intentionally include a client’s cultural or spiritual practices as a strength they can draw on, something they may already be doing that they find helpful; prayer is a common example. Often times it is helpful to help clients consciously identify what it is they are already doing to get through tough times and do those things more intentionally, as long as they are productive for them.*

Lloyd: There is research demonstrating that prayer can be effective in treating certain conditions such as depression and anxiety. But when you break down the results of that research you find that prayer involving a request that a deity give them something or do something to change their circumstance is not very effective. The prayer that is effective is non-demanding and contemplative, something like the notion of mindfulness. But often that is not sufficient. Psychotherapy is a value-added process focusing on client empowerment and self-change. Using myself as an example, I was raised in a very religious family. Being a nervous sort, I found a quiet prayer to myself before each exam calmed me down and gave me the confidence to do my best. And it worked! I graduated from high school with a B average. Then I went to university and eventually decided I had the ability to do better by establishing my learning goals and sticking to a plan to reach those goals. In the process, I no longer needed the prayer to calm me down because I was now confident in my knowledge and ability. Since then, with one exception in my master’s program, I have had straight As. Adler said we all have within an innate drive he called “striving for perfection.” The client who has stopped striving is discouraged. Our job, in part, is to help the client see that he or she has the capability to make a meaningful difference and to develop a plan to be the difference he has already decided is meaningful. As Teela said, that decision needs to be grounded in whatever cultural norms with which the client has chosen to self-identify.

Jacobsen: Lloyd and Teela, from educational experiences at the time of graduate training, what techniques were emphasized as core and then others as more secondary, even experimental — to provide a sense of the development of the discipline of counselling psychology over time?

Lloyd: In my master’s program, it was emphasized that a psychotherapist had to pick one so-called “theory” of practise and learn it well. Eclectic practitioners were viewed as muddled and slightly irresponsible. In fact, these were not theories at all but competing schools of practise that regularly, and shamelessly, appropriated techniques from each other. Most psychologists today describe themselves as eclectic, and this has allowed for an evolving disciplinary paradigm that I described in my article on **free will**. This paradigm will, I think, allow for the development of psychology as a science, and has already allowed practitioners to refine their craft using best practices from a variety of schools.

Teela Robertson, M.C.: *In my program Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Solution-Focused Therapy (SFT) were the popular choices. I believe this is due to the evidence backing CBT as well as the clear tools in each approach to help clients in very few sessions, this can be less intimidating for novice therapists. Another popular approach is mindfulness-based techniques, I often draw on mindful techniques. Similarly to my dad's experience I was told to pick a theory I most closely prescribe to as many still hold a negative view of eclecticism as an approach but acknowledge most therapists draw on tools from multiple theories. I am technically eclectic, although an Adlerian approach allows for this in terms of drawing on various techniques helpful for the client.*

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

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: You are very welcome.

Teela Robertson, M.C.: *Thank you for having me.*

Ask Dr. Robertson 8 — A Social Work Betrayal of Male

May 14, 2019

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: You wrote an article, recently, which is associated with Humanist Canada. What was the research question around male stigma? What was the tentative conclusion from the article published in *Humanist Perspectives*?

Humanist Canada Vice-President Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: Scott, you always tend to, and I shouldn't overgeneralize, and I've heard you do this before, but you tend to ask big questions that take a long time to answer.

The first part of the answer to my question is that the definition of "stigma" has to be clear. It is not the same thing as "discrimination." Certainly, where stigma occurs, you expect discrimination to follow, but you can have discrimination without stigma.

Stigma, in the definition that I am using, is the imputation of a character defect, which when believed renders members a targeted group to be unfit, not also for interactions but, for particular social interactions.

I was looking for examples of stigma that fit that definition in the population. So, using that definition, I wanted to know when gendered stigmatization occurs. That was the research question.

To do that, I had to examine the experiences of a group of men. I had a sample of 16 men who agreed to complete in-depth interviews on their experiences. I matched those experiences to the definition of stigma.

The conclusion of my study was that stigma does occur. Given the restrictions of the research method, I am not able to say how prevalent that stigma is in society. That can be answered by future research.

Jacobsen: If we're looking at those 16 men, what are some highlights from their self-reports?

Robertson: There were two takeaways with some overlap. Some men experienced two forms of stigmatization. One was stigmatization with respect to their role as parents. Men are considered to be less responsible, less able, or less reliable as good parents. They may also be considered to be more of a threat to children and women in general.

A second form of stigma had to do with male competence in certain jobs. In these jobs, men had to prove that they were not a danger to functional success due to perceived inadequacies, social work being one of those jobs.

Jacobsen: How is this reflected in the numbers of men entering those professions in history as well as the present day?

Robertson: Overwhelmingly, in social work, men are underrepresented. Some of this underrepresentation was traced to stigma in my study. For example, it was assumed that men don't relate and communicate as well as women. This resulted in men being treated differently in some ways.

(Ed. Robertson interviewed two social workers, two social work students, and three social work clients totaling 7 individuals or almost half of the sample in the study, who all experienced or reported stigma from members of the profession.)

If men as a class are assumed to have a particular characteristic that can be stigmatic. In one example, a man graduated from social work and in his first career job was given the responsibility for assessing a female single parent. The woman complained to his supervisor that he reminded her of an abusive uncle. The social worker's supervisor assumed that this was claim of sexual harassment, but she was unwilling to interview the woman for fear of furthering her "trauma." Instead, she distributed a questionnaire to his fellow social workers who were women asking whether they felt comfortable with him given that he had been accused of sexual harassment. His fellow male social workers were not given the questionnaire. He lost his job within a month of having started it. I believe that had some man said of a new female social worker, "Well, she reminds me of an abusive aunt," I believe the situation would have been handled differently.

I had not anticipated the common indictment of the social work profession. I didn't, at any point, in the survey ask whether any particular profession had stigmatic views against men. I, certainly, did not single out social work. But it kept coming up. Two of the participants in this study were students. In one case, a male student in class argued against the view that domestic violence was a male event perpetrated on women. He brought forward research evidence that showed that domestic violence was evenly split between the sexes. Most of the research that I have seen supports this view. The instructor compared this student to mass murderer Marc Lepine in front of the class, and he was suspended from the class. He was effectively drummed out of the profession for "wrong think." He later won a legal settlement because the treatment he received was clearly unjust. He told me that he had always wanted to help people by becoming a social worker and now he had to find an alternate "helping profession."

Three of the men in this study were in custody battles in which bias was evident. One example is from your province, British Columbia. A father bought a house close to the school, where his children went, because he wanted them to be comfortable going to school when they were with him. He wanted to make this transition as easy as possible for the kids, because he knew a divorce is difficult on the children. The social worker, in this case, said to him; that he was wasting his money because, in her opinion, the woman gets the children pretty much all the time. That can be an example of discrimination and not necessarily stigma. But then, the same social worker about a month later after the woman in question had ignored an order with regard to visitation rights told him, "Well, you are the man. In my opinion, I have to go with the lesser of two evils." The idea that a woman who ignores court orders is still a "lesser evil" to a man exemplifies stigma. These kinds of things happened repeatedly in the study. I was surprised that one profession should be mentioned so often in such a small sample.

Jacobsen: Even though, we have preliminary findings on some male stigma in social work in particular. What would be further directions of research deeper into the subject matter of social work male stigma or into male stigma in other domains of work?

Robertson: This method used in this study established that the conditions satisfying the definition of stigma exist as applied men. Quantitative methods are needed to establish how prevalent this stigma is found in Canadian society.

It was significant that nearly half the men in this sample recounted examples of stigma in their experiences as workers, students, and clients of the social work profession; however, this does not prove that the profession as a whole is rife with this stigmatization.

The stigma could be limited to time or place or to, for example, men of a particular personality type. A study aimed specifically at the social work profession is needed answer these questions. It would then be possible to replicate such a study on other domains of work.

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

Robertson: Okay!

Ask Dr. Robertson 9 — The Age of Psychology, Low Self-Esteem, Crazy Making, Schizophrenia, Racism, and Religious Fundamentalism

June 26, 2019

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: In “[The Age of Psychology](#),” you describe, in brief, the ways in which psychology is utilized in the modern world. The “[Epidemic of Low Self-Esteem](#)” described how this age of psychology can be used for the positive.

“[Crazy Making in Our Communities](#)” talks about the ways in which individuals can go wrong, act strangely, or malfunction depending on the frame, as in the case of [schizophrenia](#).

“[From Lloydminster to Leningrad](#)” spoke to the manifestations of the social illness of racism reflected in certain psychologies, which seems to reflect [religious fundamentalism](#).

If we look to treat extreme mental or social illnesses, how can the age of psychology, moving forward, help with their treatment — either reduction or even eventual elimination?

Humanist Canada Vice-President Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: Scott, you honour me by referencing articles I wrote for the now defunct weekly newspaper, *The Northerner*, 20 years ago. The main theme of *The Age of Psychology* seems to be even more apropos today. As a heuristic, if you read something, don’t learn anything new, but feel angry, chances are someone has been pushing your psychological buttons to get you to do something. My views on self-esteem have broadened substantially since I wrote *Epidemic*. I continue to recommend that parents spend considerably more time finding what is good and positive about their children than the negative; however, I believe that the self-esteem movement has gone too far producing people who overestimate their abilities while feeling entitled to the benefits that come with greater achievement. Studies comparing U.S. American and Japanese high school students, for example, have found that the U.S. students have higher self-esteem as related to their abilities in mathematics, but their math achievement is substantially lower. Yes, we need to praise people, particularly for effort, but they also need to be grounded in reality. I am sorry, but we cannot all be whatever we want to be, we each have limitations, and in any case, it requires work to accomplish that which is worthwhile. Our reluctance to give negative feedback has resulted in people with fragile egos who cannot handle criticism and have learned to treat negative feedback as “traumatizing.”

I was fascinated in the *Lloydminster to Leningrad* article to observe two people separated by 50 years and 7,000 kilometers who held identical racist views about Jews. Efforts to have them question their biases with facts just led to a series of rationalizations, often based on conspiracy theories, to explain away those facts. Those mechanisms are also used by the religious fundamentalists described in the article of that name. In his book *The Deadly Doctrine* Canadian psychologist and humanist Wendell Watters described religion as a kind of mental illness and in this he is in the company of Sigmund Freud who viewed religion as a kind of mass hysteria.

All of this speaks to my favourite article you referenced, *Crazy Making*. What is “crazy?” It is not being in touch with reality. The antidote is to teach reality testing skills based on natural rather than supernatural explanations using the rational and scientific skills homed in the Enlightenment. These skills need to be coupled with the belief that one can always choose

courses of action that will make one's future better instead of worse. This is the positive in self-esteem. But *Crazy Making* goes beyond this simple analysis. Communities, even societies, "make crazy" selected people they choose to demonize. The people could be Jews, Muslims, right-wingers, left-wingers, men, or any other identifiable group viewed as "toxic" in some way. The 1960s rock band Jethro Tull, in their song *Aqualung*, sang of demonizing the homeless as a way of making the majority feel good about themselves. As a humanist, I don't believe in demons. I believe people are essentially good and I agree with something Jordan Peterson said that we should approach every encounter with the attitude that here is a human being who knows something I do not yet know. I think that if we hold our own beliefs to be tentative dependent on further evidence, and that the people holding contrary beliefs are, nonetheless, good in their intentions, that we will have done a lot to improve mental health in the world.

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

Robertson: Thank you for this opportunity to go down memory lane, Scott. I hope my reflections will help others to also reflect, each in their own way. The ability to reflect is in effect, the ability to reprogram we, and that is a key part of what it means to be human.

Ask Dr. Robertson 10— Real Life Effects of Fantasy Categories

July 21, 2019

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: A serious social disorder remains racism. A sense of superiority based on a non-biological, but still sociological and fictitious, category with real-world consequences. For example, you wrote on white supremacist forms of racism.

One correlation or driver is the power dynamics of racism. The power differential, presumed or perceived, may create fertile grounds for the sense of unworthiness described in the writing on cults, too.

What seems like cultural means by which to deal with racism and cults, as a set or separately? What tools of the psychological trade can be useful here?

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: I was hopeful, when I wrote the first article you cited, that racism was in decline. The idea that racial categories were arbitrarily defined was gaining acceptance, laws against racism were being enforced by human rights tribunals, fewer people were spouting racist ideas, and those that were would often be publicly challenged. That trend line has been changing. Just this last week a law professor at Penn State in the U.S. said that her country would be better off if it restricted immigration to "whites." A teaching assistant from the same university said she always asks black females students questions first. From there she ranked a series of minorities based on her estimate of "deserving" ending with white males whom she said she called on only if there is nobody left.

If I was to guess the psychological mechanism prompting the law professor's racist statement would involve fear — fear that cultural values she holds dear are disappearing. The driving emotion of the teaching assistant's racism is probably anger. She has a sense of social justice based on real or imagined historical wrongs, and she is intent on using her power to right those wrongs and punish those she sees as evil or in some way responsible. Historically it is not uncommon for the racist to describe the victims of racism as evil.

The law professor may be afraid that the underlying values of her civilization, having built the richest, best educated and most tolerant civilizations known to mankind according to Steven

Pinker, are being challenged in a way that will eradicate those advances. The teaching assistant, also driven by feelings, believes that the whites who have tended to dominate the economic pyramid in that civilization need to be replaced. The two are united in believing that there exists a pendulum with the teaching assistant believing that the pendulum should swing to favour those who have been historically disadvantaged. Those who wish to set the pendulum exactly in the middle like to set quotas for university entrance and various occupations based on population estimates, but the setting of such quotas reward tokenism or place-holding over ability and initiative thereby reinforcing the law professor's concerns. The only way to eliminate racism is to get rid of the pendulum.

The pendulum is the concept of race, and as I pointed out in my initiating article, race is an illusion. All physical characteristics tend to blend into various population groups, and no one set of characteristics is common to any. Anthropologists in the 1970s and 80s tried. By comparing blood type, skin colour, head shape and other physical characteristics they came up with three major races: Negroid, Caucasoid and Mongoloid. But even these categorizations are not discrete. Let me give you an example. In Canada, Jagmeet Singh likes to say he is the first visible minority member to lead a major political party. But his ancestry is Indo-European — he's a Caucasian. He could still be a member of a visible minority if we define "white" more narrowly than Caucasian — and that is exactly what happens. Racial categories are defined by political expediency with people who would formerly have identified as "white" now claiming aboriginal, Hispanic and black status for the benefits accorded those categories through the quota system. We can remove the pendulum through colour-blindness. One of the participants in my doctoral research refused to identify as Metis because she did not live "Metis culture." (see: **Aboriginal Self**). She did not identify as "white" either and when reporting to the census takers she would attempt to list her ethnicity as "Canadian." What if, in any event, this woman was discriminated against because of her ascribed race? I would propose that laws against discrimination on the basis of race or any other fantasy categories continue.

Jacobsen: Okay, what is the connection between cults and racism, if any?

Robertson: In its original meaning "cult" meant a system of religious veneration directed toward an individual or saint, but in its modern form it connotes a form of mind control. "Mind" as used in this sense is the product of a self that is structured to incorporate elements of individuality, volition, constancy, and logically consistent thought. David Martel Johnson, after studying pre-Homeric Greek and Egyptian cultures concluded they did not have minds. I think his judgment is a little harsh, but they certainly did not have minds that functioned to differentiate the objective and subjective as we commonly value. Cultists operate by convincing their following to give up their sense of reason, and to trust the leader. Nazi philosopher Martin Heidegger masterfully deconstructed science and reason as flawed, but he was not a relativist. He taught that one who was "Dasein" could determine ultimate truths and, of course, he and the Fuhrer were Dasein. Of concern, Heidegger may be considered the modern founder of postmodernism.

Cultish societies are xenophobic, and this antipathy for the outsider can easily lead to racism. Tribal societies, as existed in all of our pasts, were notoriously xenophobic, so this may be a tendency built into us. One of my concerns is that identity politics may be leading toward a kind of tribalism that involves the demonization of the outsider. The antidote for cultism, tribalism and attendant racism is to help people construct healthy selves that are capable of "minding" that Martell describes. I have argued that the project of psychology is to teach people to exercise free will as is possible with a complete and healthy self (see: **Culturally evolved self**).

Related to this, I would suggest the terms “western medicine” and “western science” are racist. What is referred to by these terms is a method of streamlining our reasoning processes that occurred as a result of the European Enlightenment, so from a historical sense the use of these terms is defensible. How it is used; however, is to imply that there are “alternate ways of knowing” that are more effective or more appropriate for non-European peoples. It is Heidegger all over again, and it is used to discourage non-European peoples from exercising their individual reason in favour of some collectivist or groupist template. It thus puts those people in a cognitive disadvantage.

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

Robertson: It was my pleasure, Scott.

Ask Dr. Robertson 11 — Smells Like Teen Spirit: Hell Hath, No Fury Like a Youth Scorned

August 13, 2019

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: You have **commented** on the ways in which gossip can even move to the point of Satanic cults and the like. You have **remarked** on Satanic beliefs among youth and the reasons for the attraction of it.

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: I wrote the first column a couple of years after a child was murdered in La Ronge, Saskatchewan by two older children, age 14 and 8. The murderers believed that if they drank the rendered fat of a virgin, they would gain the power to fly. The victim had been dead for a couple of days before his family realized he was missing and reported his disappearance to the police. Nonetheless, the story was circulated that the police would have acted more quickly if the victim were “white.” Then the story was circulated that a Satanic cult was operating in the community and the perpetrators had been “possessed.” Fingers were pointed at adult individuals who were seen to be potential cultists.

Several years later, I was asked to do workshops on Satanic cults in two communities of the Peter Ballantyne Cree to the east of La Ronge. Some youth had murdered several cats and smeared the blood in a local church. Soon after, Satanic symbols were found scrawled on walls in a second community. The RCMP, at the time, had a special unit to deal with cults and that unit was brought in. The Department of Indian Affairs funded cult experts to come in. I had a chance to talk to some of the youth involved. In a nutshell, they were angry with their parents and the adults in their communities, and this was seen as a way of giving expression to their anger. But to this day, you will find adults believing that some mysterious cult had entered their community and possessed the minds of their youth.

I would like to update an account I gave in the second article linked to your question, Scott. The account given, that Satanism is a mutated form of early paganism involving pagan survivors of Christian persecution, was an accepted narrative within anthropology. But I now believe that the vast majority of women and men who were burnt at the stake during the 16th and 17th century European witch-hunts were, in fact, Christians who had no connection to either pagan or Satanic beliefs. A kind of malignant gossip mutated and spread inciting fear and the need for drastic action engulfing, in some cases, whole communities. You can read my recent work on mind viruses here: [Viruses](#).

The “Scott Boyes” mentioned in the first article was the editor of *The Northerner* that originally published this series. He had final say on whether my teasing him about hypothetical gossip would be seen by the readers.

Jacobsen: Your **writing** on Christmas and its history is of interest here too. Is there a common system of belief around oppositions? In that, those leaving Christianity may be more attracted to inverted belief systems, where negative valence beliefs become positive in the newer worldview, e.g., the interest in the archetype of evil in Christianity in the Devil seen as representative of the highest good. Is this particularly the case among the young?

Robertson: That certainly was the case with respect the Peter Ballantyne youth. Their parents were all Christian as were the authorities against which they rebelled. Although there is no evidence that the Church of Satan was involved in their activities, having looked at their website,

I believe that church represents an inversion of Christianity as well. To be clear, if Christians are seen to do evil, as they did with the Indian Residential Schools for example, then that which the Christians fear must be good. Of course, the logic does not necessarily follow.

There is no evidence that the boys who murdered and ate the flesh of the young virgin were operating from any inverted belief system. The Christianity of their parents simply made magical or supernatural thinking acceptable, so their actions must be seen within the same paradigm that allowed for the burning of the witches. Immoral superstitious actions done out of fear or opportunism have the same result to the victim. The antidote for such viral thinking is a healthy dose of rational and scientific thought. I think that critical thinking should be taught at all levels in our educational systems and that no topics should be exempted from rational inquiry.

By the way, in my seven years of writing for *The Northerner*, there were only two articles they refused to print. One of them was this article on the history of Christmas. I was told it would offend some Christians. The other was an article critical of Toshiba.

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

Ask Dr. Robertson 12 — Fault and Responsibility: If You Pass the Sentence, Then You Should Swing the Sword

August 26, 2019

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: You **comment** on a couple of cases of personal responsibility and, more particularly, personal fault passed onto others or systems & institutions. How can institutional systems and legacies completely disempower parts of new generations of peoples?

Dr. Lloyd Hawkey Robertson: As I re-read the commentary I wrote nearly twenty years ago, it seems, sadly, to be even more relevant today. At the time I viewed the legal cases from lawsuit happy U.S. America, as bizarre and slightly humorous anomalies. For example, the thief who got trapped in a garage and subsisted on Pepsi and dog food until the homeowner came back from holidays, and then had the nerve to sue for unlawful confinement, had to be one of a kind. So, I thought. But it is like a mental virus that has grown and evolved into something quite dangerous.

My original conclusion was that if we blame others then we are basically saying they have power over us, and we are mere victims. About a dozen years after I wrote that an indigenous man murdered his wife and kidnapped his stepdaughter in my home community. After the man was apprehended, his sister told the press that her brother was the real victim because he had gone to an Indian residential school. My point is that yes, bad things have happened in the past, but that is not an excuse bad behaviour in the present. We have the power to choose how we will respond, and from that realization comes our own empowerment. We may not be able to control what others do, but we can always choose how we will react. And we can react with dignity in a way that makes the world a better place. Unfortunately, there are psychological reasons, and sometimes money, to be made from playing the role of disempowered victim, and this has contributed to the rise of a victim culture in Canada.

Jacobsen: Please explain what you mean by “victim culture.”

Robertson: Certainly, Scott. I operate from a humanist perspective that accords every individual worth and dignity by virtue of being human with the implication that people should conduct themselves accordingly. But if your self-identity is moulded around being a victim, you are proclaiming that power rests with the perceived victimizers. The victim then attempts to persuade people with even more power to punish the victimizers and redress the wrongs, often through financial compensation. But this comes at great cost to the individual. Let me give you the example of marriages. I have found marriage counselling to become more challenging over the past thirty years despite the fact that I have become more skilled with experience. Half the battle in marriage counselling is communication and developing the ability to understand the other’s perceptions with empathy. Increasingly I find that one or both partners have developed narratives of being a victim. And when they are presented with an alternative perception, they simply repeat their own victim narrative verbatim, only more loudly. And when this does not work, they declare themselves to have “not been heard,” and this further increases their sense of victimization. A couple of years ago I published some research on secular **weddings** and I found that people are as likely to have been legally married at least once by the time they reach my age, as they were 50 years ago, but at any given time over half the adult population is single. There is a reason for that.

We have evolved to the point where people's primary identity is as a member of a victim group who have been considered historically wronged. Academics have even coined the word "transectionality" to describe people who are simultaneously members of multiple victim groups thereby attaining a higher ranking in the world of victimology. This is not to say that some of the victimization isn't real. Even white males can point to accurate examples of **victimization**. But if our primary identity is based on something negative as opposed to something positive, then we pay a heavy psychological price.

You asked about the role of institutions. Ultimately, victim culture leads people to become helpless victims waiting for the state, or others, to make things right. Whole classes of victim groups have emerged with status accorded to ascribed degree of victimhood. Some politicians are only too happy to gain votes by acknowledging various groups sense of victimization and even apologizing for it. They may even pay compensation. But in the end, this only reinforces dependency and disempowerment. Which suits the politicians because then they can go after the same votes, in the same way, time and again.

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

Ask Dr. Robertson 13 — A Hawk’s Eye on Counsellors’ Professional Ethics and Morals

September 17, 2019

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: You give **insight** into counselling in the fact that, in general, advice is not given, as in counsellors do not tell clients what they should or should not do.

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: That is correct, Scott. As explained previously in this series, I practise in Adlerian tradition where advice giving is anathema, and this view comes from a humanistic view that we, as a species, are defined by our ability to reason in an objective, volitional and internally consistent way. I made the argument that psychology, as a profession, seeks to teach people to reach this human potential in their individual lives (see: **Free Will**). While the advice giver is usually well-meaning, advice giving puts the receiver in a dependent position. In its most extreme form, advice giving reduces the receiver to an automaton waiting for direction. The advice that is given is necessarily from the perspective of the one who is giving it, not from the perspective of the receiver.

Often counselling and psychotherapy are considered to be synonyms, but Adlerians make a distinction: counselling is essentially joint problem solving done with clients who have intact selves while psychotherapy involves the reconstruction of part of the self (for a discussion of reconstructing the self-see: **Self-mapping**). In either case the psychologist acts as a kind of consultant who has expertise in change while the client is recognized in having expertise in understanding himself. The counselling session becomes the collaboration of two experts.

I think the notion that counselling is advice giving comes from outside the profession but is popular enough that some psychologists accept that definition. But they then typically view themselves as psychotherapists. As I said, the professional ideal is to promote individual volition, and this typically involves constructing alternatives with the client mapping pros and cons and deciding on a plan.

Jacobsen: What is a way in which counsellors violate professional ethics and codes of conduct here? How have things gone wrong in the past? What examples speak to this in the history of counselling?

Dr. Robertson: Were the therapist to impose his views on a client, that would be unethical. We need to understand that the client is in a vulnerable position, and that is why they are seeking counselling or psychotherapy. A therapist with the best of intentions may think that the answer is obvious, but unless the client arrives at that conclusion by considering his or her alternatives, priorities, goals, and worldview then the imposition of a “solution” that appears right to the therapist does nothing to build the client’s capacities as an independent volitional individual. I think this is a standard understanding of most historic schools of psychotherapy, but there are exceptions.

Soviet psychology of the 20th century provides an example of systemic unethical diagnosis. Soviet psychologists viewed the communist man (inclusive of women) to be more collectivistic and altruistic than others. It seemed to them self-evident that the mentally healthy person, if given the opportunity, would want to participate in such a society. Those who did not agree with this worldview and were in conflict with the authorities were deemed to suffer from what was termed “sluggish schizophrenia.”

When an ideology or religion is used to modify terms like “psychology,” “counselling” or “psychotherapy,” I become wary. For example, how does “Christian Counselling” differ from counselling? Christian counsellors I have talked to define their religion as having certain superior attributes with respect to love and spiritual fulfillment. But a secular counsellor, on finding that a client believed in prayer, for example, might invite the client to pray as part of his or her therapeutic plan. A difference might be that if the prayer does not work to the client’s satisfaction, the secular counsellor might be more willing to explore other alternatives while the Christian counsellor might be more prone engage in self-limiting platitudes such as, “Maybe God does not want this for you.” Counsellors employed by Catholic Family Services are routinely required to sign a statement stating they will respect the Church’s beliefs regarding “the sanctity of life.” This is regularly interpreted to mean that counsellors in their employ may not explore the option of abortion with pregnant clients, and if a client chooses that option, she will do so without the support of her counsellor or therapist. Counsellors from a variety of Christian denominations actively discourage people who are non-heterosexual. A particularly unethical practice is encapsulated in the oxymoron “Conversion Therapy.” Conversion implies a template outside of the individual to which the individual converts. It is, therefore, the opposite of therapy where the client defines his own template. Overall, Christian counselling does not add to the professional practice but is subtractive, limiting the options permitted clients.

The notion of limiting psychology’s ability to increase to individual choice and volition is pervasive. Feminist Psychotherapists argue for equality between the sexes, but most psychotherapists already embraced this ideal long before there was Feminist Psychotherapy; indeed, Alfred Adler introduced the idea to the Viennese psychological circle founded by Sigmund Freud in 1911. The purpose of Feminist Psychotherapy has not been to develop new therapeutic techniques since the methods typically used, such as journaling, re-framing, assertiveness training was all initially developed by other schools of psychotherapy. We are left, therefore with an ideological reason for its existence, as one feminist writer of textbooks noted (Corey, 2001) “A goal of feminist therapy is to replace patriarchal ‘objective truth’, with feminist consciousness...” In this formulation, objective reality is deemed to be patriarchal, and since most schools of psychotherapy assume that there is an objective reality to which the client may reference (Narrative Therapy being an exception), then those schools are, by this definition, patriarchal. In a decision that reminds us of the Soviet diagnosis of “sluggish schizophrenia,” the American Psychological Association has decided to recognize a category called “toxic masculinity.” In a move that reminds us of Conversion Therapy, the Canadian government has decided to fund feminist organizations and therapists to convert toxic men into... something else. I have demonstrated that male stigmatization exists (see: [Stigma](#)), and my fear is that a purpose of this conversion therapy will be to have men internalize this stigma with the long term effect of further eroding their mental health.

Scott, you asked me about professional codes of ethics. Codes of ethics are written by those with the power to do so. Conversion Therapy as practiced by some Christian groups has been ruled unethical. The feminist version has not. I believe that freedom of conscience involves a duty to conduct oneself to a higher ethic, and in my case that ethic involves supporting individual volitional empowerment. Individual volition operates within the constraint that there is a reality outside us and if we stray too far from that reality we will harm ourselves and others. We cannot gain empowerment by feeding a delusion.

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

Ask Dr. Robertson (and Teela) 14 — Adlered with Eclecticism: A Confidence of Riches

November 4, 2019

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What are the risks of personal religious or non-religious background influencing the professional work of a counselling psychologist while in session with a client — in general terms?

Dr. Lloyd Hawkey Robertson: I attended a cousin's wedding during the 1980s officiated by an Evangelical Christian minister. As part of the ceremony, the minister advised the happy couple that disagreements were part of marriage, and that if they had problems that they cannot resolve they should go see a pastor, a church elder, or a trusted family member. He advised them to never see a psychologist. There is a tension between psychology and religion that is often not recognized and is even less often addressed, and that tension stems from conflicting worldviews. I make no apologies for expressing a worldview of client individuality, empowerment, and self-actualization. The imposition of my worldview beyond this fundamental understanding would be unethical.

Our worldview is a kind of map of our understandings and expectations that, in turn, colours and even distorts our perceptions of reality. Our worldview begins with our childhood experiences and our interpretations of those experiences. Psychology is premised on the view that humans are volitional individuals capable of discerning reality acting in the social interest, and as I have argued, psychology is largely about teaching those skills to our clients (see: **free will**). Religion is premised on the view that humans are not up to this task, and that we need external direction on questions such as good and evil, ultimate meaning, and transcendence. Religion is inherently directive, and while psychology is not always non-directive, client empowerment is its core objective. Psychotherapists must bracket other aspects of our worldviews that might interfere with client self-actualization. There are obvious limits to this approach. For example, it would be unethical for me to help a sociopath become more successful in systematically harming other people. Instead, I should offer to help the client overcome whatever pathology presents with the hope of self-actualization within a socially useful frame. This places me in the role of the expert with respect to diagnoses.

Teela Robertson, M.C.: *One's cultural background influences their perceptions and meaning making of situations. This includes faith, ethnicity, local culture, family culture, and so on. Psychologists are not immune to the effects of how our personal perspective influences our perceptions of clients, the trick is to ensure we are self-aware and able to monitor when it is our beliefs coming through versus the clients. Ideally, we work with a client based on their cultural background and beliefs regardless of how this fits with our personal beliefs. This is not always an easy task. When the beliefs of the psychologist and client do not align, we not only have to be aware of where our biases come in, but also the limits to our knowledge about the client's belief system. So, to answer your question, the main risk I see is that the psychologist may start to impose their own beliefs upon the client.*

Jacobsen: **Dr. Robertson, you work with each client as a culture of one. How does this approach respect clients with unique versions of common and uncommon personal issues? Teela, in conversations with your father, how does one incorporate secular and faith-based approaches to suit the preferences and background of clientele in counselling sessions?**

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: My “culture of one” approach assumes the uniqueness of each individual. By understanding individualized inner motivations, we will often find that behaviour that otherwise presents as abnormal is really a logical attempt to satisfy basic needs. Therapy then consists of brainstorming with the client alternative ways to meet these needs.

It may be that the client most at-risk for culturally inappropriate counselling has a therapist who is a member of the same racial, cultural, or religious group. The risk here lies in the therapist assuming an understanding of the client’s personal culture. If that happens, the client will likely feel compelled to “go along with” the therapist’s assumptions for fear of being labelled a deficient member. The second biggest risk might be for clients of culturally sensitive counsellors who have taken a workshop on the culture of the client. Let me use the example of a hypothetical non-aboriginal therapist counselling a person with ancestry that is indigenous to Canada.

Such a therapist will likely have learned about sweat lodges; a ceremony indigenous to most aboriginal cultures in northern North America. The sweat lodge ceremony may be used to connect to a transcendent power, heal certain ailments, or bond with fellow community members. Asking an aboriginal client whether they attend sweat lodges might be off-putting to those aboriginal people who view such ceremonies to be witchcraft. Such people might be particularly sensitive to such a question because some Aboriginal Spiritualists have referred to them as “apples” for not following their traditions. Asking a woman if she attends sweats might be an insult if she is from a more traditional community that practises male only sweats. It is better to understand the personal culture of the individual before exploring behavioural alternatives, and it is safer to come from a perspective of “not knowing” where the client is considered to be the expert on him or herself.

Teela Robertson, M.C.: *Whether one is religious or not I try to match the counselling tools to the client’s needs and beliefs, I believe my dad does the same. One way we have discussed incorporating faith into counselling is through the tools they already have that they find helpful, a common one is prayer. I think the trick is to ensure that the client is using tools in a healthy way. For instance, if a client were to tell me that they pray to God to take away all their negative emotions, we will need to modify the expectation that they can stop feeling any negative emotion and engage in psychoeducation about emotion. Something like prayer can be quite healing in providing people with a sense of hope that positive change can happen.*

Jacobsen: Speaking of differences in background, in general, do men and women require different counselling methodologies based on different needs? If so, how, and why?

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: There are statistically significant differences between men and women for a number of behaviours, but the range is such that you cannot predict the values, attitudes, and behaviours of any one individual based on their sex or gender. Again, I would recommend that each client’s personal culture be explored without presuppositions. Following exploration of the client’s worldview and agreement of presenting issues, I like to offer the client a range of possible interventions drawn from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Adlerian Psychotherapy, and Narrative methods, and then have the client co-construct a treatment plan.

Teela Robertson, M.C.: *In my opinion the differences in approach I take lie more with personality. I find a greater proportion of my male clients than female clients have been taught not to show “weak” emotions such as sadness, and anxiety, instead they may show these as anger or a lack of emotion. To combat this, I often find I spend more time with males working on the basics of learning to identify and name emotions, as well as creating a supportive*

relationship where it is safe for them to share these emotions with me. I commonly explore how they learned about emotions and what they were taught about how to deal with them, as well as how they were treated when they showed emotions. As a whole I don't find a great deal of difference between treating men and women.

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

Teela Robertson, M.C.: *Thank you.*

Ask Dr. Robertson 15 — Life Raft in Entertainment: Protection Against Marketing and Advertising

December 25, 2019

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: You **spoke** on advertising and marketing deluging our consciousnesses throughout or modern lives. How can education and individual initiative, and conscientious, protect against some of these negative forces?

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: If you think that advertising is about announcing new products, then you are vulnerable. Advertising is rarely about announcing a new product, and even when it is, it is about pushing your buttons to buy that product. We think we are freely choosing a product or service, but as I have argued previously free will is largely an illusion (see: **Free Will**), and can only be exercised in a limited way by having objective knowledge of relevant conditions. If we are primed to buy, vote, or otherwise interact by unconscious triggering, then we are not exercising free will.

A recent television ad reveals how this works. The ad begins with the upbeat rock tempo of Barracuda, a song about a sexually aggressive woman who trolls men. With this music in the background two young men offer, “Shopping while hungry... is a dangerous game.” We then see a short, plump, and wide-eyed woman drinking a brown liquid from a bottle while frantically pushing a shopping cart down a grocery aisle. We then see several actors including one who is rubbing her pregnant belly soulfully repeating the phrase, “Shop like a mother.” We don’t know whether the woman who was drinking chocolate milk while shopping is a mother, a barracuda or both. But here I am exhibiting the uniquely human trait of finding relationships where none exist. We are given four disjointed memes without a defined storyline. If any one of those memes (classic rock from a women’s band, men referencing shopping as “a dangerous game,” anxious shopper, or motherhood) connect our subconscious with the supermarket in question, then we will think of that store when the trigger meme presents (For a discussion of this mechanism see: **Mind Virus**). Unlike this example, most advertisements have some sort of narrative, but the narrative is not the part of the ad that programs you to buy, shop, or act in a way intended by the advertiser. It is the memes imbedded in the ad that are the activating agents.

You may think that when that expensive \$2.5 million T.V. ad comes on during an all-important football game, you ignore it and go to the fridge for a beer. What brand of beer? I am old enough to remember when European beers outsold U.S. beers which were commonly compared to dishwater in Canadian pubs. But after an extensive long-term multimedia campaign that including identification with Canada’s national game (hockey), one of those foreign brands has become dominant in the Canadian market. More money is spent producing television advertising than is spent on the programs that attract you to the T.V., because it works on targeted consumers. Psychologists have become mental technicians using sophisticated eye-tracking and brain wave experiments as well as surveys and focus groups to help the corporate elite push your buttons. They are using your dreams, desires, and subconscious triggers to sell you stuff that you otherwise might not want.

Sometimes they use fear. We are all familiar with negative political advertising. A rival is painted as having a “secret agenda” or as having a questionable past. The same technique may be used in marketing. One European carmaker, promoting its reputation for safety, weakened the structure in a selection of competitor’s vehicles while reinforcing their own beyond production

standards to produce an ad where rollovers produced disproportionate damage in North American vehicles. Safety fears would then drive customers to their brand.

Negative advertising has also been applied to the sale of foods. The phrase “health food” is used to imply that competing products are not healthy. One “health food” chain actually developed an aerosol spray which they used daily in their stores to mimic the smell of 19th-century grocery stores with the implied assumption people used to eat healthier. The so-called health food industry became a victim of its own success. The established chains began selling the same products with lower overhead, but the emphasis on negative advertising remained. Goods are now often promoted on the basis of what they do not contain instead of what they do contain. Going “gluten free” or “lactose free” is a necessity for people who are allergic to those products but of little import on most of us; and the alternatives are often more expensive with less nutritional value. For example, while almonds have been shown to have similar nutritional value to milk, less than 2% of “almond milk” is actually almonds. The product is essentially coloured water.

Advertisers do not always succeed. A company selling shaving products recently ran a series of ads degrading masculinity as “toxic.” While the ad won favour with a particular political lobby, it offended a large percentage of the constituency that buys most of their products. Sales plummeted, and the company replaced the offending advertisements with ones that celebrated masculinity demonstrating that consumers have the capacity to defy advertisers.

You asked how we may avoid the negative effects of advertising, Scott. We need to do more than simply not buy a product when we are offended. Simply turning off the remote is insufficient because it only results in advertisers increasing their saturation through multiple mediums. The amount of advertising space on television has more than doubled in the last 35 years, and on U.S. channels you can be deluged with 12 minutes of advertising in a 30-minute slot. You may have noticed they also turn up the volume to ensure that if you don’t see the ad, you will at least hear it. Ads appear on shopping carts, parking meters and even electronically triggered above urinals. The cartoons that used to introduce movies were replaced by advertising long ago. My internet provider asked me if I wanted to stop seeing an ad, and when I hit the “yes” button, it then asked me why. And my computer was frozen until I answered the question! The cost of all this advertising is built into the price you pay for the product.

One way to protect yourself from advertisers is to avoid buying heavily advertised products. A more sophisticated variation of this strategy is to know your triggers and refuse to buy from advertisers who push those buttons. For example, the majority of males are attracted to women. If this is one of your buttons, refuse to buy from an advertiser who pushes it. Many feminists miss, but most men know that the attractive woman with the .7 waist to hip ratio selling overpriced consumer products is not selling sex but status. By noticing men with high-status women are, in fact determining the status level of men. Men who lack status, such as the 90% in prisons who are men, the 80% who are homeless, the 75% who commit suicide, and the 50% who are victims of domestic violence are invisible to most women. The promise of the advertisers pushing this button is that if you purchase this overpriced product, you will demonstrate status. I know of one of the federal political leaders has two Rolex watches. Even one Rolex is an excessive display of wealth similar, in kind, to a peacock displaying his feathers to the peahen. Both men and women have sex and status buttons, but they also have the power to ignore advertiser’s attempts to push them.

The ultimate answer is to research each competing product comparing quality and price. For example, we could research the nutritional value of a variety of foods and match these foods against our own nutritional needs. We then may add additional factors such as taste and price in making a decision. Unfortunately, we do not have the time to sufficiently research every product we buy. We are forced to rely on heuristics.

Some people simply buy the cheapest. While this is often this a good policy, you could be sacrificing quality. You could also be sacrificing your long-term interest. U.S. “transnationals” are famous for undercutting local companies only to jack up prices when the competition is gone. This not only hurts consumers but leads to a loss of jobs and often to a reduced tax base.

We become creatures of habit almost by necessity. We buy the same brands until we have reason to change that decision. If this is your profile, then compare shopping with others from time to time, looking for alternative opinions to research. Knowing that we become largely creatures of habit, advertisers target children. Soft drink companies vie for the school market. The Pepsi-Cola company has “donated” sports equipment, and Coca-Cola has “donated” scoreboards in exchange for the right to have vending machines in the school. Like the early Indian reserves that were designated “Anglican” or “Catholic”, educational institutions may be designated “Pepsi” or “Coke” but not both. Fast-food chains and pharmaceuticals offer to go “in partnership” with schools in supplying textbooks, computer equipment and curricula. Sweden has banned all advertising aimed at young children because of the long-term habituation.

Your free will may be exercised if you become a knowledgeable shopper. This means ignoring advertising and forming your own ideas about quality. Do the research on selected shopping habits from time to time. Avoid impulse buying. Throw away coupons unless they are something you already wanted. Know whether the product is local or foreign. Read consumer reports. Be careful about buying heavily advertised products. Approach all advertising skeptically.

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

Robertson: You are most welcome Scott.

Ask Dr. Robertson (and Teela) 16 — Exaggerated Insensitivity: Iniquity Upon the Sons, and the Son's Sons

April 16, 2019

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Lloyd, in “Ask Dr. Robertson (and Teela) 14—Adlered with Eclecticism: A Confidence of Riches,” you stated, “There is a tension between psychology and religion that is often not recognized and is even less often addressed, and that tension stems from conflicting worldviews.” How does religion undermine “client individuality, empowerment, and self-actualization”?

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: In my new book *The Evolved Self* that will be coming out September 15, I discuss how the “modern self” capable of individual volitional planning is a cultural artefact that evolved prior to the “Axial Age” when most of the great religions of the world came into being. I make the argument that religion was effectively a way to keep the individualism inherent in having a self in check, to keep the collectivism of humans as social animals paramount. Traditionally, Christians have been taught that the self is wicked and must be denied. Buddhists proclaim that the self is the source of all suffering, and they proclaim a doctrine of “no-self.” Confucian teaching subjugates the self to the family and tradition. The word “Islam” means “submission” or “surrender.” Although it came later in mankind’s cultural evolution; its roots are in traditional Judaism. In each case, the self is something to be given up in favour of a reality defined by the dogma and leaders of the religion. This places those leaders in the role of defining the will of the collectivity.

Contrary to Foucault’s teaching, the self did not come into being with the European Enlightenment. What the Enlightenment did was proclaim that the notion of objective reality that could be discerned by the individual was a good thing, instead of fearing the individual self, the Enlightenment embraced it. This led to an outpouring of ideas and objective inquiry, and the scientific revolution it spawned is still on-going today.

Psychology came late to the scientific revolution, in part because it was actively repressed by religions, more so than other fields of objective inquiry. All psychotherapies start from the premise of the client as an individual with unique experiences, interpretations, and social relations. The client is then empowered to make changes to themselves in keeping with those experiences, interpretations, and social relationships. The very act of empowerment supports the ability of the person as an individual to make such decisions. Positive Psychologists, in particular, have come under criticism for undermining collective societies. What do they do that is so undermining? They ask the client what is meaningful for him or herself and they ask what would make them happy.

Jacobsen: Teela, you said, “When the beliefs of the psychologist and client do not align, we not only have to be aware of where our biases come in, but also the limits to our knowledge about the client’s belief system.” What is an example of this innervation of the beliefs and biases of the counselling psychologist in practice? A hypothetical case extrapolation from practical experience would suffice, too.

Teela Robertson, M.C.: *An example of this might be a similar situation to what my dad described in our last interview where a therapist has taken a course on a culture, let’s say North American Aboriginal people, and believes they now have good understanding and make assumptions based on what they have learned. Engaging in this type of practice negates the*

individuality of lived experiences as well as aspects unique to each community. To further this example, let's say the therapist is an atheist and the client is a devout practicing Christian, the therapist has a role to try and be aware of any assumptions they hold about the client's culture and beliefs and differences between them and the client. In this case, a therapist rejecting a client's use of prayer or church simply due to a belief. It is a fable and ineffective would not be helpful if it would damage the rapport built with the client. On a cultural front, a therapist assuming an Aboriginal client should turn to traditional healing or connect with elders without knowing how that client feels about and connects with their own culture could be damaging. I have found in practice it is best to ask clients what things mean to them and to hear about their practices before inserting assumptions and interpretations.

Jacobsen: Teela, why does Canadian culture teach men to refuse showing 'weak' emotions, including the aforementioned sadness or anxiety, or even to name the feelings?

Teela Robertson, M.C.: *The societal failure to teach men it is acceptable and normal to have and express the full range of emotions seems to come from times past. It can be demonstrated in statements many, even women, have heard growing up such as "stop crying", "man up", "I'll give you something to cry about". These statements are all telling children it is not acceptable to feel and express their emotions. In turn, children may come to believe it is wrong for them to cry. That to be a man they need to be tough and that means not crying. Instead, anger becomes a more acceptable emotion to show, and those deeper emotions come out looking like anger. I don't know that I have a good answer to why this has been taught.*

Jacobsen: Lloyd, what is the impact of Male Stigma, as preliminarily researched by you, on the full expressive range of the emotions of men?

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: One of the common experiences of men in my stigma study was that when they attempted to express their negative emotions about how they were abused by the justice system, child welfare agencies, employers and even neighbours who assumed men are perpetrators and women are victims. They were told by feminists, both male and female, to "man up" or "be a man." The message is clear. Men are asked to share their emotions, with the suggestion that they are unwell if they don't, but they can only share those emotions which are acceptable to the prevailing ideology. This put them in a double bind—they were blamed for not sharing their emotions and they were blamed when they did.

Jacobsen: Lloyd, following from the last query, how are young and old, men and women, and so on, culpable for this prevention of the full flourishing of men's emotional lives in Canadian society?

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: The repression of emotions in men is very old indeed. Male circumcision was practiced by numerous ancient societies as a rite of passage. Boys had to bear the pain without crying to become a man. The practice also taught the new men submission to the collectivity in a way that made them good warriors. Curiously, we still do not commonly refer to the practice of circumcision as "male genital mutilation."

In a different interview, I talked about my experiences as a youth growing up in the industrial town of Lloydminster. I talked about how men knowingly kept jobs that they knew were dangerous to their health and well-being because they needed to support their families. Even today men predominate in jobs that are dangerous, unhealthy or involve a lot of travel. And if they get paid more for working in these jobs, then there is talk about a "gender wage gap." Men

are expected to take these jobs without complaint and, apparently, to not be paid extra for the privilege. Yes, we as a society are still just as culpable for repressing male emotions as we always have been. The problem with that repression is that it sometimes comes out anyway, as anger.

Jacobsen: Teela, following from the previous question, how does this impact the emotional, social, and even, potentially, intellectual growth of men in Canada?

Teela Robertson, M.C.: *It seems to me many people, not only men, end up struggling to show and communicate emotions whether theirs or someone else's. This can be damaging in relationships where one might feel they should not express emotions, and that their feelings are not being heard or validated. If we do not know how to express our emotions, we may instead be fighting them and trying to keep them down. We may also feel uncomfortable with others' emotions and end up sending a message that they cannot express emotions to us, which in turn hurts emotional closeness in relationships. Rather than simply disappearing the negative emotion may fester and each seemingly small pain adds to the point the emotion boils over and cannot be hidden. This can be dangerous depending how the emotion erupts, for instance, it could be in the form of physical violence, or a verbal assault.*

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

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: You're welcome, Scott. My pleasure.

Teela Robertson, M.C.: *You are welcome.*

Ask Dr. Robertson 17: The Era of Personality Disorder Diagnosis

June 4, 2021

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: We have commented briefly on “[The Age of Psychology](#),” “[Epidemic of Low Self-Esteem](#),” “[Crazy Making in Our Communities](#),” “[schizophrenia](#),” “[From Lloydminster to Leningrad](#),” and [religious fundamentalism](#). It has been a small bit since the commentary. What are some developments on the views there for you?

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: You certainly delved into my personal ancient history for this question, Scott. “The Age of Psychology” was the first column I wrote prior to the millennium for the now defunct newspaper in *The Northerner*. My intent was to show how pervasive applied psychology is in our lives, for both good and ill. I do not think that has fundamentally changed in the intervening decades. You have actually linked six articles I wrote from that era, and I am guessing that you see them connected in some way. I think they all relate to how we interpret the world, creating and maintaining our worldviews.

My views on the “epidemic” of self-esteem have become more nuanced since I wrote that article. While low self-esteem continues to be an issue often confronted by counselling psychologists, and I continue to recommend that parents find the good and positive in their children, the “epidemic” label has led people to become afraid of giving balanced and constructive feedback. This has resulted in a disconnect between subjective and objective reality. For example, U.S. students typically score higher on measures of mathematical self-concept as compared to Chinese students, but the Chinese students score higher on measures of mathematical achievement. The result is that many U.S. Americans do not know what they do not know, but they think they are doing just fine – not cognizant that they are being outclassed by the Chinese.

In North America we have witnessed grade inflation to maintain student self-esteem. In an example of this, I case-conferenced with a teacher to discuss reading problems with his adult upgrading class in a northern community college. “But they all have marks in language arts above 80%,” I said. “I know,” he replied, “I helped them get good marks by reading the questions to them and by helping them with their answers.”

The teacher said that about a third of his students were functionally illiterate, and he wanted to know what he could do to help them. I suggested he could begin by giving honest feedback. Students need to know their strengths and weaknesses so that they can dedicate their efforts to overcoming those weaknesses. This unfortunate teacher sensed that for these students it was already too late – that they did not have the skills to handle such constructive feedback.

The flip side of the over-zealous application of the self-esteem movement is mental fragility. Students have been taught that they can be whatever they want to be, but the self that is then created is fragile. Sooner or later reality impinges on illusions. We now have the word “micro-aggression” to describe and defend against that experience. When someone, usually inadvertently, says or does something to challenge a fragile worldview, the fragile self at the core is taught to feel the experience as a micro-aggression. Lashing out with defensive anger and hatred, they demand apologies, community censorship, even firings. If these demands are met, they feel vindicated with their fragile selves affirmed.

The other four articles you referenced, Scott, all have to do with how people create and enforce dysfunctional realities. “Crazy making” describes a woman who, after being convinced by an abusive family and community that she was crazy, began displaying symptoms of schizophrenia. “Schizophrenia” describes a common reverse process – people who actually suffer from the disease refusing to take their medication because they believe that they no longer have the condition. “Lloydminster to Leningrad” describes the ways two racists, separated by distance and time, held on to their anti-Semitic beliefs in the face of evidence. “Fundamentalism” describes how a religious congregation attempted to shut down La Ronge’s only bookstore for carrying the wrong kind of books.

As a society we made considerable progress in combating racism, supporting people with mental health problems, and in promoting free speech and the diversity of ideas. I fear a new dark age where society is being re-racialized through identity politics, gaslighting is occurring at a societal scale to challenge our ability to think objectively, and authors and academics are being “de-platformed” so their ideas cannot be heard.

Ask Dr. Robertson 18: The Web of Life, and Mind: Unweaving Its Rainbow

June 26, 2021

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: You **characterize life as a web**. New weaves added while others removed or changed in the web of life. To a more general point, why does psychological writing rely so heavily on metaphor? Does this reflect, in a way, the amount known while the huge amount not known about the human mind's dynamics while also the importance of immediate conveyance in meaning in spite of it? Do psychotherapy and counselling amount to controlled-environment, systematic rituals for clients with therapists?

Dr. Lloyd Hawkey Robertson: Metaphor is a kind of mental scaffolding that allows us to explore new concepts using more established, well understood ones. Metaphor predominates in psychology because it is a new science playing catch-up. We might blame Rene Descartes and his Faustian bargain with the Roman Catholic Church for this. Cartesian dualism held that the natural world could be understood by science and reason, but the mind or soul could only be understood from divine revelation. This dualism likely contributed to Descartes avoiding the censorship and imprisonment faced by his contemporary, Galileo, but the notion that the study of mind was beyond the ken of science set back psychology by about 200 years.

In the newspaper column you cited I said each of us builds a mental structure of significant others that supports our self-definition as a person. This structure can be compared to a spider's web with each foundational thread representing a significant other. When a foundational person dies, our mental web collapses, and we must re-weave it in accordance with this new reality. Such a metaphor is useful in understanding the purpose and task of grieving, but it is not as useful in understanding who we are in other contexts. In mapping the self-more recently (**Robertson, 2016; Robertson and McFadden, 2018**), I have shown that who we are is more than the relationships we have established. I have also shown how complexes of memes that initially exist outside our selves can appropriate our resources after becoming attached (**mind virus; woke virus**). Metaphor helps us to understanding new phenomena by scaffolding new information on concepts that are already understood, but we need to be cognizant of the probability that the new phenomena also differ from the metaphoric concept in some ways. While mind viruses are like physical viruses in that they can only propagate from inside a host, as non-physical agents they avoid the limitations of proximity required by their natural world cousins.

With respect to your second question, I hope that psychologists do not descend to prescribing set piece rituals. While I believe that we as human beings benefit from ritual, and we may suggest clients consider enacting a meaningful ritual in a given situation, it would be unethical to prescribe any specific ritual. Grieving, in this example, is not the ritual; it is the culturally mandated practices associated with grieving that are ritualized. Psychologists need to be able to transcend such practices. For example, I have helped individuals who have been unable, for psychological reasons, to attend funerals of loved one by assisting them to identify individualized alternatives. Our project is to transcend both ritual and culture where necessary for the well-being of the individual by helping our clients choose from menus of new possibilities.

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

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An Interview with Carey Linde and Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson on Transgender Identities, Transsexual Identities, Current and Historical Orientations, and Psychological Science Definition of the Self (Part One)

March 22, 2020

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Let's begin with some open statements, not on general but, on relevant expertise in these areas. On transgender identities and transsexual identities, what are the relevant areas of expertise or qualification, or professional experience, for each of you?

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: *I know Carey primarily from newspaper reports, and I admire him for taking an unpopular and public stand while representing a father who argued his daughter should wait until she was 16 before transitioning into a male form. I know none of the actors in this case and therefore I cannot comment as a psychologist on any of their motivations, but the public discussion demonstrated, I think, confusion over terminology and a hardening of positions that sometimes-trumped reason. I would like to hear Carey's views on this.*

My own area of expertise within psychology is the self, and I have a book coming out on that subject this fall. Transwomen volunteered to become research participants in two research projects I conducted: one on mapping the self and the other on the stigmatization of men. In one case the subject had a series of bad experiences with males, and ze viewed short hair as a sign of evil. Another subject had a series of bad experiences with women, but both viewed themselves to be part of a third gender separate from men or women, so the term "transgender" was not really appropriate in their cases. I have also worked with trans people in my private practice, and I have a personal interest in this area. My cousin and I were raised together as kids and ze transitioned when ze was in his fifties. I think of my cousin as a "her" when remembering her in female form, but as a "him" in his present male form. I suspect this tells you more about me than him, but I suspect I am probably normative on this point.

Jacobsen: To define terms scientifically, psychologically, and colloquially, what are transgender identities? What are transsexual identities?

Carey Linde: For a person feeling their gender is different from their sex assigned at birth they can adopt 3 degrees of transitioning:

1. They can adopt an opposite gender name, assume the clothes and hairstyle and outward manifestations of the opposite sex. Perform and present as if the opposite sex. This is called social transitioning.
2. After a period of time and psychological if not psychiatric counselling, and a medical determination that the person suffers gender dysphoria, or perhaps not, the person can receive opposite sex hormones. This is called hormonal transitioning.
3. After further counselling and medical attention, a person can undergo genital reassignment surgery. Women desiring to be men, will have double mastectomies. The term transsexual is currently narrowing to describe this 3rd stage.

Robertson: *I am going to disagree with Carey a little here, although I acknowledge he is using politically correct definitions, and probably the definitions that are used in court. The idea that sex is assigned at birth is just silly. Human infants are born with penises or vaginas (some are intersex, but they are a vanishingly small percentage). We do not assign the sex, but we notice and name the difference.*

There is a stronger argument that we assign gender at birth. The term “gender” was appropriated from the study of grammar in English speaking countries during the 1960s to represent learned roles, behaviours and associations associated with sex: we teach girls to act as girls and boys to act as boys. What we have learned since then is that much of what we thought was learned with respect to personality, behaviours and even interests are innate, and that men’s and women’s brains are different in some ways. An excellent primer on this is Steven Pinker’s classic The Blank Slate.

The fact that we are not “blank slates” does not mean we are all the same. Both women and men exhibit a large spectrum of behaviours with considerable overlap with the result that it is a mistake to overgeneralize and say, “this is what men are like” or “this is what women are like.” A problem with the concept of gender; it tends to lead to just that. At one time people who were cross-dressers or were “masculine” women and “feminine” men still retained their biological sex identification. Now many are considering themselves “transgender” without any intention of changing their sexual characteristics. I read a newspaper account of a biological woman who is having a child and wants to be named as the child’s father. You can see that the concept of gender is actually restricting diversity by suggesting to people who do not adhere to what are now considered gender norms for that sex are not really of that sex, and that gender trumps sex. The term “transsexual” is more objective. A person who has completed hormonal and surgical sex change has now changed their sex, and we can see that this is so.

Jacobsen: Dr. Robertson, what seems like the dominant orientation of the psychological community – across schools of psychological thought – on the question of heritability of general intelligence, personality, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity, inasmuch as a consensus exists on these areas of ongoing research?

Robertson: *It’s nature and nurture. Twin studies, for example, suggest that intelligence is .80 heritable. Similarly, the “big five” personality traits including extroversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness are not only highly heritable, but are predictive of voting patterns. Sex is 99.7% heritable if we define sex by one’s genitalia. In identical twin studies, 52% of gays whose twin was gay were also gay. Gender is not heritable by definition if we view gender as learned behaviour distinct from sex. Sex linked characteristics are heritable and may vary with individuals. We build our gender identities to accommodate our biology from a menu provided by society. That menu is changing.*

Jacobsen: To take a historical perspective, what are some of the oldest substantiated cases of transgender and transsexual identities known in the anthropological records?

Linde: Here I have to plead lack of time at this moment to get into detail. There are numerous web sites treating this subject. Historians and even archeologists have and are reporting presumed evidence for trans people throughout history, either as individuals or segments of societies. I have just started listening to an Audible book Transgender History by Susan Stryker. It canvases the history from colonial USA to present.

Robertson: *Cultures indigenous to North America often had a category of “two-spirited” people who dressed and took on many of the roles of the other sex, but also had special roles assigned to them. The role of male “two-spirited” people among the Cree, for example, was to break up fights and negotiate peaceful behaviours. Here we have the example of people of the male sex, dressing like women, taking on female roles such as making pemmican, but also doing more dangerous work as peace officers. This could be interpreted as a third gender and supports the idea that transsexual people probably existed in Neolithic societies prior to recorded history.*

Jacobsen: To set a tone for expectations of some interpretations and misinterpretations of the responses, even the questions, for the interview with the two of you, what is the current social and political context (or are the current social and political contexts) for Canadian society now?

Linde: Again, I feel the need to refer to the extensive existing opinion on this. It depends on who you ask. SJWs thinks the future looks great, despite the continuing struggle to get there. Gender critical feminists (TERFs) see unmitigated disaster. Take your pick.

Having said that, it is a mugs game trying to make any statement about how “regular” citizens of Canada think. Mainstream media bias has kept what little is reported almost exclusively supportive of the SJW warriors. It is my sense that the majority of Canadians, for instance, do not agree with the idea of trans women (men to most) in protected women’s spaces.

Robertson: *I think Canada is a tolerant society compared to most in recorded history. We have encouraged people from minority cultures to maintain their cultures and languages, we have enshrined aboriginal rights in our constitution, we have even taken down statues of the founding father of the country because his memory offended some people. These accommodations are rare in human history and have only occurred during the modern era. I think overwhelmingly most Canadians support social justice, but we may have differences on what that means.*

When Carey is talking about social justice warriors, in this context, he must be talking about the activists in the transgender movement who attempt to prevent people whose opinions they abhor from speaking in universities and libraries. But what he misses, I think, is that the gender critical feminists are also social justice warriors. They are directly descended from the radical feminists who were and continue to be almost androphobic in their fear of men as oppressors of women. We are asking these women to share their safe spaces in bathrooms to women’s shelters to people who have penises.

I agree with the transactivists who say this fear is often overblown. Most men define their gender role as protecting women, not oppressing them. Further men who identify as women would be expected to be less likely to assault those that they wish to emulate. Having said that, some men are a threat to women, and the subjective and fluid nature of gender allows such men to declare themselves to be women so as to gain predatory access.

I agree with Carey that most Canadians do not want men or women with penises in protected women’s spaces. I see a coalition forming that would have been unthinkable just ten years ago. The radical feminists and the traditional women represented by organizations such as

Real Women agree on this issue. This coalition could spell disaster for some of the people I care about deeply.

Jacobsen: How does this social and political context (or do these social and political contexts) impact the conversations on transgender identities and transsexual identities?

Linde: If by “conversations” you mean two or more people in rational polite discourse, there is none, zero, squat. No one is talking to any one of the opposite beliefs. The gender critical feminists regularly invite participation from the trans warriors. None accept.

A further unknown is to what extent can it be said the ANTIFA led demonstrators who show up to shut down the symposiums of gender critical feminists represent anyone other than themselves?

Robertson: *I love my cousin. I watched her battle recurrent major depression for decades and since he transitioned, he has been depression-free. He was able to transition, and thousands like him, because we live in a relatively tolerant society with people who see the social justice of it. But in an outright battle between a feminist-traditionalist alliance and the transactivists, I can see many of these gains being lost. I agree with Carey that no one is talking to each other, but we need to begin this dialogue, and soon.*

For my contribution to this dialogue, I would like to propose we discard the language of transgenderism. In the first place, the idea of transgender is binary, and this restricts us from considering the possibility that there may be three, four, or even more genders. Second, the idea of gender is subjective. Cross-dressers, female impersonators, and people who simply prefer what they see as the normative behaviours of the opposite sex can call themselves transgender. I see nothing wrong with that except gender cannot be allowed to trump sex. In Vancouver, we have seen a transwoman complain to a human rights tribunal that a gynecologist refused to examine her male genitals. If you believe the precept of genderism that male and femaleness is a matter of cultural preference, you can see the logic of this, except that gynecologists have no training in working on male genitalia. But the structure of transgender ideology is rife with such contradictions.

I prefer the concept of transsexualism. If a person believes that they were born into the wrong body, then it is therapeutic that they change their body. Once a person has transitioned to the body of their preferred sex, then they should have no problem occupying the spaces of that sex. We can negotiate special protections for those in the process of transitioning. What of the people who have no interest in changing their sex? Well, in a tolerant society you can live as a man or a woman in any way you desire as long as you do not pose a threat to others. I think by focusing on transsexualism we can reach compromises in the interests of all sides.

Jacobsen: In question 1’s response, Dr. Robertson references a case by you, Mr. Linde. He was impressed by the courageous position taken on a father of a 16-year-old child. He could not comment on it. You could comment on it. What were the details of this case, Mr. Linde? Dr. Robertson, what was the more impressive position taken by Mr. Linde?

Linde: The client had a 14-year-old child identified as female at birth. In grade 7 the school gave the child a male name without telling the father. He found when reading the yearbook and found a male name under the photo of his child. I grade 8 the school moved the child along the treadmill leading to a trans pro psychologist and to the Gender Clinic at a local

hospital. The clinic advised the parents the child was going to receive puberty blockers and opposite-sex hormones. The father objected and the matter ended up in court.

The 2 lower court judgments and the decision on the appeal of those 2 judgments can be seen at

<https://divorce-for-men.com/resources/social-justice-identity-politics/vancouver-14-yr-old-trans-gendering/>

Robertson: *I think I said that the father, in this case, wanted his progeny to wait until ze was 16 to commence her biological sex change, but he lost the case. There are potential arguments on both sides of such cases. On the one hand, adolescence is a time of exploration with respect to sexuality. Given this, the request of the father seems prudent; however, an alternate conclusion could reasonably be reached where the child is suicidal. Unfortunately, there are websites coaching children of 12 or 13, or even younger, on how to appear suicidal so as to convince professionals and courts that a sex change is necessary. Complicating the issue is the fact that post-transition youth also have a higher-than-average suicide rate. There are psychological reasons why a child might make the determination that they were “born in the wrong body,” and if I understand this case correctly, the father’s fear was once his daughter began to transition into his son through hormonal blockers, the transition would be a fait accompli. We need a societal conversation on these issues, but to date, the conversation has been rather one-sided with people who question transactivist orthodoxy “deplatformed” or silenced. What I appreciated about Carey’s stand is that he presented an unpopular position on an issue where discussion has been repressed. I do not know what the professional fall-out has been for him, if any, but I imagine the pressure was immense.*

Jacobsen: Dr. Robertson, you mentioned the confusion of the public in terminology. What confusions were present in this case? Mr. Linde, what sparked original interest in the aforementioned case? Also, to the two of you, did the case come to a resolution?

Linde: I came aboard on the case because I felt the father had not been treated fairly in the whole mishmash. Also, I objected to the manner in which the court was denying the father freedom of expression.

The appeal court allowed the hormone treatment to remain but broke open speech freedom a little bit. Most importantly it established that misuse of pronouns and name could not be family violence. The court ducked the issue of the best interest of the child stating that was up to the doctors. It strongly implied the doctor had to look at a lot more than merely the child’s felt gender wish.

Robertson: *I think the term “transgender” is the source of much of this confusion. The federal legislation giving human rights protection to “gender identity” was ill-thought out and added to the confusion. As we have seen, gender is learned behaviours associated with sex-roles. Identity is how we choose to define ourselves, and that can change over time. But much public policy conflates this with the assumption that gender is somehow innate. For some purposes in the public arena, gender is learned; for others, it is a synonym for sex, and which rule is applied seems arbitrary. This confusion leads to poor decision making.*

Jacobsen: Dr. Robertson, how does the psychological science definition of the self-link to the issues here on transsexuality and transgenderism?

Linde: Above my pay grade.

Robertson: *As I said in response to a previous question, the psychological consensus is that we are a product of both nature and nurture. In my academic writing, I have argued that the self is a culturally evolved structure that has come to give definition to our species. The very name we give ourselves “homo sapiens” suggests we are rational and volitional. But to exercise these potentialities, we need to have them embedded in our self.*

The self is not entirely a cognitivist structure. Years ago, Demasio suggested there existed an emotive “feeling of me.” Further research has identified differences between the male and female brain, and such research supports the idea that at least some transsexuals were indeed “born in the wrong body,” with regard to the structure of their brains. We also need to recognize, however, that there are other possible routes to transsexuality. A further complication is that homosexuals also often exhibit this cerebral variation as do some heterosexuals.

In the end, however, we develop a kind of mental map of who we are, and we act as though the self-identifiers in that map are true. I present the self-map of a transwoman in a book that will be published by University of Ottawa Press this fall. Not unsurprisingly, the self-map includes two clusters – male and female. The memes ze placed in the male cluster were all things ze did not like about herself including being bald, mortal, old, depressed, and self-defeating as well as being male. The memes in the feminine cluster included being creative, sensual, hopeful, intellectual and a writer. Ze pictured a war going on within this self between masculine and feminine sides; however, this is surely wrong. The male side had no consciousness capable of making war, it was merely the repository of unwanted characteristics. For example, “self-defeating” referred to the subject’s habit of ensuring failure when on the brink of success. Ze said, “no testacles will benefit from my success.” The essential components of our evolved self-including volition, uniqueness, productivity, and social interest were all on the female side. It was a war like a person is making war on nature when he, she or ze mows the lawn. In keeping with that metaphor, ze had zer testes removed during the course of our interviews.

An Interview with Carey Linde and Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson on Gender and the Law (Part Two)

August 1, 2020

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: As the 2010s rolled past us, what were the most sensitive political and social outgrowths of transgenderism and transsexualism in this period?

Carey Linde: If you mean for the trans community, it was the developing collectivity of community. This increasing conspicuous collectivity in the public eye caused the very phobia from which the community wished to escape. As with acceptance of blacks and gays over time, gender identity issues and people are ubiquitous in the media. It is all less sensitive to a growing progressive set of the population. At the same time, the faith-based right is rallying and dangerous. Gender radical feminists are under literal attack by the trans warriors.

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: *Transwomen have been extremely sensitive to being accepted as women and have battled for recognition often using the courts and human rights tribunals. A coalition of women is challenging their right to compete in women's sports, occupy women's safe spaces such as women's washrooms and shelters, and access special female funding and programming for education and career development. It is interesting that transmen have not faced the same resistance from the vast majority of men. I can see a number of possible reasons for this difference. First, it is possible that men are more accepting of diversity as compared to women. Second, it is possible that women do not want to share their special privileges with people they do not recognize as women, and that would include allowing people who have had the physical advantages of growing muscle and bone density in a testosterone rich environment competing in competitions reserved for women. Third, in some situations, women may have a genuine fear that people with penises who claim to be women may be a threat to their safety.*

Jacobsen: Following from the previous question, what might be a furtherance of these, positive and negative, social, and political outgrowths of these issues?

Linde: Increasing acceptance by hopefully the majority will make life less dysphoric for most. The conservative right will become harsher and succeed in passing laws against what they don't like. Freedom of speech will be a major victim. It already is.

Robertson: *Relying on recent federal legislation, the Ontario courts have forced the Ontario Minor Hockey Association to allow adolescents with female bodies to change in male change rooms. This is the kind of social experiment no university ethics committee would ever approve. One of two outcomes is possible. Either a number of people with girl's bodies will be sexually assaulted by adolescent boys, or they will not. If we don't see sexual assaults flowing from this experiment, then we may reasonably decide that we do not need separate facilities for males and females at least for safety reasons. We are beginning to see this change with respect to the washroom issue. If, on the other hand, we see a number of sexual assaults, the logical conclusion would be to end the experiment; however, I don't think that will happen. I think politically, the politicians behind the experiment will refuse to accept its failure. They will double down with increasing expensive measures to protect the genetically female while engaging in male-blaming, perhaps with references to "toxic masculinity." But we as a society do not need to follow them down this hole.*

I think we need to begin by acknowledging that people on both sides of this issue have valid points and concerns. As a society, we need to construct a synthesis from the thesis presented by the transactivists and the antithesis represented by the growing feminist-traditionalist coalition. We can only achieve this by respectfully listening to all concerns and responding to those concerns with sympathy. Scratch any scared or angry person and you will likely find a good person inside.

Jacobsen: Mr. Linde, how is Canadian society more dysphoric than in the past? How can Canadian society become less dysphoric than at present with the issues of transsexuality and transgenderism more in the public consciousness now?

Linde: There are great works written that diagnose the malaise, alienation, addictive self-destruction, and dysphoria experienced by most of mankind in the present stages of world corporate capitalism etc. Canadians among them. With some exceptions, life is more stressful and not less. "...transsexuality and transgenderism in the public consciousness" is a freak out knee jerk ego offended reaction. One percent or less of the North American population has captured a historic position in the broad political, cultural, and social media consciousness. The ubiquitous question is how did this happen so fast and why?

Many explanations are given. All making a contribution. No single answer has rung the bell yet. One of the new phenomena fueling the panic is the increasing number of young girls and women deciding that being a boy in this world is a safer bet than being a girl. And the medical profession and big pharma is right there to enable this delusion.

Robertson: *We have the situation of men being more accepting of transmen than women are of transwomen. The hypothesis that men are more accepting of diversity would require more study across different groups; however, such an explanation would be more acceptable to feminists than the obvious alternative, that biological women are protecting their privileges from competition while men have no such privileges to protect.*

If men are more accepting of diversity, it would have to be a function of socialization. The testosterone that gives men their sexuality also translates into stronger bones, more muscle mass, and increased aggression and competitiveness. These latter two traits were necessary in traditional hunter gathering societies to fearlessly challenge competitors, both predatory and human, to protect bands that were essentially extended families. But aggression and competitiveness need to be controlled or channeled if civilization is to work. Religion played a pivotal role in controlling and channeling male aggressive instincts in the formative years of our human civilizations. We have largely transcended religion by secularizing our ethics and expanding their application to all humanity, as for example, with the establishment of universal human rights. And we have been incredibly successful. Steven Pinker has meticulously documented how we now have fewer homicides, fewer deaths due to war, more gender equality and lower poverty than ever before in human history.

The argument would be then that the history of civilization is, at least in part, a history of controlling and channeling male testosterone. That aggression has been channeled into business, sports, politics, and protection of the nation-state. Men have been conditioned to increasingly ignore minor or insubstantive difference, but of course there are numerous variables that also influence behaviour in particular contexts. Of concern to me is that tribalism has been increasing with a recent focus on ideological, cultural, and racial identities and that this will result in breaking down the more universal humanist ethic. To take the

argument full circle then, if the process of civilization included the aspect of controlling and channeling male testosterone-linked behaviours, then we would expect that women would have been less affected by this aspect of socialization. This would have left women more susceptible to ancient xenophobic fears including fear of “the other.”

Jacobsen: Dr. Robertson, Mr. Linde opines, “Freedom of speech will be a major victim. It already is.” Is this true to you, too? If so, what forms of freedom of speech, as a colloquialism for freedom of expression? Mr. Linde, on the same note, who have been the central culprits in the reduction in freedom of speech? To both of you, why them?

Linde: The central culprits in killing free speech are public institutions (such as universities and libraries) and the mainstream corporate media. Having said this, on the evening of Fer 1 I attended a hotly protested talk at the Seattle Public Library by WoLF radical feminists. Seattle’s finest had to come in and haul off demonstrators who were set on denying women the right to speak. And in March the Vancouver Public Library will be reversing previous denials and permitting radical feminists to rent space for a function. This is a good sign for libraries. Now if only the universities would come out of hiding.

Robertson: *I agree with Carey that freedom of speech is threatened, but I would add that it has always been in a vulnerable position. I have argued that the modern human self-capable of individual volition and objective thought is a cultural artefact that evolved more than 3,000 years ago (see: [Free Will](#)), and that modern religions evolved, in part, to control and restrict the individual volition inherent in this self. Galileo, for example, was imprisoned for observing that there were moons circling Jupiter. Such observations undermined the Catholic Church’s then geocentric view of the universe. Fundamentalists and literalists from all major religions hold that their dogma is “revealed truth” superseding any contrary findings of science or philosophy. Until recently, that view was on the defensive worldwide; however, the attack on science and reason has been enjoined from a different direction.*

On the surface, postmodernism which holds that all “truths” are provisional based on time and context appears democratic. The logic of postmodernism holds that there are different “ways of knowing” and that all are provisionally true. In keeping with this, Tom Strong of the University of Calgary stated that science is merely a “white, male way of knowing.” Similarly, some feminists have coined the somewhat sexist term “mansplaining” to counter males when they use logic to refute some aspect of feminist dogma. I pointed out to Dr. Strong one- and one-half decades ago that if science were only a “white, male way of knowing,” the holocaust would be a Jewish male way of knowing (most of the writers on the subject are male), and the colonization of the Americas is only an indigenous way of knowing. With postmodern relativism each identity group conflates belief with truth ignoring or discounting evidence that may undermine that “truth.” But when framed as “truth” instead of “belief,” people exercising their freedom of speech to deny “my truth” is felt to be offensive. Hence, we have seen people “deplatformed” from speaking at universities and libraries, and we have even seen university professors fired for not speaking the “truth” of the dominant ideology. In my forthcoming book I point out the roots of postmodernism in German fascism, and I believe that it inevitably leads to totalitarianism.

I think we can agree that transsexual people have a human right to freedom of expression which is, of course, a broader concept than freedom of speech. Concomitantly, radical feminists, traditional women, and fathers such as the one Carey is representing need to be

heard. But there can be no dialogue without differentiating between subjective realities and objective reality. If we do not respect science and reason, then we are left with different “tribes” shouting at each other with no discourse possible.

An Interview with Carey Linde and Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson on Ethics, Freedom of Expression, and Socio-Politics (Part Three)

August 15, 2020

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What should be the legal status on the issues of transsexuality and transgenderism in regard to some of the aforementioned stages of change? Where do parents' rights and children's rights work well together in this context and not well together for the overall well-being of the child or adolescent?

Carey Linde: I detect cocktail and beer parlour disputants, maybe out of pure exhaustion caused by confusion, are intellectually prepared to throw up their hands at what adults want to do. But children – hell no! The ever-louder exception are the die-hard cultural resister radical feminists who say men who think they are women must stay the F#K out of women's historical safe and protected spaces.*

The rights of parents and children ultimately exist only in legislation and law. In the US increasing numbers of republican dominated state governments are enacting laws making it illegal for doctors to transition children, schools to push it, sports teams segregated by sex, and to stay with historic pronouns. Provincial and federal governments in Canada are going the other way. Canadian courts have barely started looking at this stuff.

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: Although I am not a lawyer, I would think that it is difficult to have consistent law on internally subjective criterion. I would therefore switch from a focus on gender to sex. A person's sex can be objectively determined by criteria that is understood beforehand. People who are in the process of transitioning may be granted special or provisional status taking into account the fears and concerns raised by women and by parents.

Jacobsen: Mr. Linde, why the focus on world corporate capitalism as an ill? What makes the "medical profession and big pharma" part of the problem rather than a component of an integrated solution? Dr. Robertson, why the limitations in the study of, and the lack of study of, the acceptance of greater diversity by men than by women? That is, why are some questions simply not asked in some eras? Why is the channeling of aggression and competition necessary for the advancement of civilization? Will religion or proto-religious movements rise in the place of diminishing universal human rights as an ethic? Are they rising?

Linde: The profit motive is ubiquitous in corporate share owner capitalism. Big pharma pushes pills. Too many in the medical profession are ideologically rather than scientifically driven. One either sees and understands this or they don't. Together they integrate in the current worldwide experimentation on transitioning children.

Robertson: It is in the nature of the capitalist to maximize profit. Capitalists who fail to live by this maxim do not remain capitalists for very long. Unless they have a monopoly, they lose to the more ruthless. From this lens, corporate philanthropy is a public relations expense. A bit of history is useful for illustration.

Husky Oil was such a small player after World War II that it could not afford to build a new refinery. Instead, they bought an abandoned oil refinery in Moose Jaw and moved it to the Alberta side of Lloydminster to avoid Saskatchewan's more stringent worker-safety legislation. When I worked at the refinery it was easy to recognize the men who worked "on the rack" for years because they had thick leathery faces from repeated exposure to the fumes from loading

tanker cars. I had the more dangerous job of working in the packaging plant where we poured roofing tar and super-heated pipe enamel into cardboard drums where the product cooled and solidified prior to shipping. Occasionally the mixture would bubble and splatter the workers in the plant. The boiler plant operators were different because they looked normal, but they tended to be deaf. Yes, the company provided ear plugs, but you had to take them out when communicating with other workers when a boiler was about to blow. The heyday of industrial capitalism is over in this country, and such working conditions would no longer be permitted except in third world countries, but the principle is the same – to grow a company needs to exploit its workers or its consumers. Certain questions would destabilize the existing order and are simply not asked. In Lloydminster during the post war era, no one ever questioned Husky Oil.

Could “big pharma” be part of an integrated solution? Only if you feed the beast. Husky Oil eventually built its new upgrader plant in Saskatchewan only after a massive subsidy from that province. “Big pharma” will be part of the solution to the new coronavirus, and they will pocket a significant portion of the billion’s governments have earmarked to fight the disease. Who is going to maximize their profits on the transsexual issue? Follow the money.

Why is there no money to study the greater acceptance of diversity by men on these and other issues? Why is there less money for the study of men’s health generally? Certain questions would destabilize the existing ideological order. We are supposed to see the men at Husky who knowingly sacrificed years off their lives in order to provide for their families as exploiters. Men’s lives just don’t count for as much. Prior to her presidential run in the U.S. Hillary Clinton said that the real victims of war are women who lose their husbands and their fathers. The notion that the real victims of war are dead did not appear to have crossed her mind.

Why are men used as cannon fodder on the front lines of war? Because we evolved to be more aggressive, stronger, and fearless in protecting family-based bands, tribes and eventually nation-states. But that aggression must be controlled if those political units are to endure. In the end, being a man is a cooperative enterprise. Now we have males transitioning to be females and vice versa. It’s an interesting social experiment.

Jacobsen: Dr. Robertson, why is free speech important now, or always? Mr. Linde, is the event described in Seattle a harbinger of anything or events to come in the 2020s in regard to free speech, and hate speech, or “freedom of expression” in the parlance of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the United Nations (and the European Union)? Mr. Linde and Dr. Robertson, what is the purpose of hate speech? What are the positive and negative results of the legislation of speech via hate speech laws? Mr. Linde, how are social factors and various legislations of speech preventing needed conversations and the infusion of appropriate expert testimony on relevant medical matters surrounding transgenderism and transsexuality? Dr. Robertson, with postmodernism extant without explicit labelling, and so more easily spread in some ways, how is the nullification of values via the collapse of all principles to the same valuation exacerbating clarity on issues on transgenderism and transsexuality?

Linde: Hate speech serves to rationalize and compensate for feelings of fear and inferiority in the hater. Hate speech legislation is a good if it can prevent physical harm befalling a person or group of people.

Needed conversations are frustrated because the gate keepers of the public platform for discourse are cowed by the trans warriors who redefine the common usage of phobic and hate. For an expanded expression of this see my letter attached.

Robertson: Without free speech, and its twin “freedom of thought,” society ossifies. We lose the ability to meet new challenges in new ways. One of the challenges in improving society is to deal with hate speech and we need freedom of speech to do that. Hate speech is the advocacy of harm to a group of people based on inherent qualities ascribed to that group. Having one’s concept of reality challenged, or one’s entitlements challenged, is not in itself hate speech. We have an example from the transsexual community that brings this to light. There are some who believe that sex is a social construct while one is born with an innate gender. I happen to believe the reverse. People are born with certain genitalia and that is not socially constructed. On the other hand, gender is a social construct – it is how we learn to be a man or a woman. And gender is fluid because there are all sorts of ways of living one’s life as a man or a woman without going through reconstructive surgery. Is it hate speech for me to have this opinion? Some people would say “yes” but that is an abuse of the term. I don’t hate anyone, and I am not telling anyone how they are to live their life, except that they should not live their life in a way that harms other people or restricts their freedom of speech.

Jacobsen: Mr. Linde, what seems like the precise ideological premise – not philosophical view as a whole – of “cultural resister radical feminists” behind the cultural resistance? That which leads to the cultural resistance on these particular discussed topics. What is the culture being resisted? How will the split between some of Canadian society and some of American society in legislation lead to different problems to the cultural issues at present? Dr. Robertson, an objective perspective on the issues can be helpful, i.e., sex discrimination in criteria compared to subjective perceptions of self in regard to gender. What facets of the self, of self-perception as in gender, can be close to objective to make some of the issues of gender clearer and more distinct in conscious discrimination in a manner similar to a sex criterion? What aspects of the self in gender will remain entirely, and far, within the realm of the subjective to make these considerations simply harder to delineate?

Linde: If by “cultural resister radical feminists” you mean TERFS or gender critical feminist, I can say this: the population of trans gendered persons in the US and Canada is estimated to be between 1 and 2 %. The opinion survey quoted in m Attached letter says 19% of Brits are in support. Therefore, it is the proponents of transitioning who are the resistance to the more dominant culture. The gender critical feminists and those who support them vary on their definitions of a trans woman. They all agree that such a person does not have the life experiences and biology to qualify as entitled to enter women’s special spaces. Not necessarily because of fear. For many it is cultural. Breach of historic privacy.

Robertson: I don’t think gender can be objectively defined. We construct ourselves through a menu of possibilities given to us by an increasingly international and cosmopolitan culture, and by new creative possibilities we may invent for ourselves. Part of that construction is how we relate first and foremost to ourselves as sexual beings. In the end, some people may conclude that they were born into the wrong sex, and if they want to change their sex so be it. But it is their subjective notions they are pursuing, nothing objective about it.

Jacobsen: The law, it may stagnate or change here. Mr. Linde, what seems most needing change? Dr. Robertson, how can any future change in law incorporate expert/professional

medical and psychological opinions to issues facing a super minority of the national population while causing severe divisions within the sociopolitical environs of the country? Mr. Linde and Dr. Robertson, let's say Canada sits on its hands on issues of transgenderism and transsexuality, what happens at that time? Alternatively, let's say Canada becomes entirely onerous in either sociopolitical direction on issues of transgenderism or transsexuality, what happens in either of these cases? Please take both extremes to provide a personal interpretation of a possible range between the antipodes presented here.

Linde: Gender warriors, being outed more and more by the media, respond with increasing animosity and ferocity. ANTIFA is now at every rally. The gender critical feminists and the legions of conservative and faith-based citizens who support them remain equally adamant they won't change their positions. It is an intractable confrontation of fundamental human values on both sides. The trans warriors refuse to talk to the other side. The TERFS are always inviting the warriors to talk. Neither side talks to the other. Even the Palestinians and Jews talk to each other. Until and unless each side is prepared to moderate and accommodate the concerns of the other there will be no peace. Period.

Robertson: We live in an era dominated by identity politics where people who are not part of, or do not support our particular tribe are thought of as oppressive, evil, hate mongers. Were either of these sides in the extreme win and define the law, that would result in the negation of the rights of the other. It would be nice if these sides were to come together and come to some agreement, but that is not likely. It is more likely that the great majority who have remained largely silent will tire of the game and will proclaim the rules both sides would have to live by. I would hope those rules would provide for the sanctity of freedom of speech and freedom of expression. I would hope that those rules define objectively when a man becomes a woman and when a woman becomes a man, and that will mean relegating all notions of gender to the subjective. But once a transwoman meets that definition, then she should be accorded all of the rights and privileges our society gives to women. No half measures.

Articles

Requiem for the Humanist Association of Canada (HAC) Discussion Page

July 12, 2022

Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson

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In the early 1990s the Humanist Association of Canada (HAC) created an on-line open discussion forum for people who believed in the free and open exchange of ideas and were committed to respecting the dignity of each individual. This forum moved to Facebook shortly after 2005, and the discussion group's membership grew to more than 1,500. Then, in 2015 a re-branded Humanist Canada unveiled its new professionally designed Facebook page. Only board members could initiate posts on this new platform (although this right was eventually taken away from them as well). The old HAC listserv was allowed to continue. Although it was basically self-monitoring, board secretary Michel Virard was named administrator, and I was named as one of three moderators. This article is about how this discussion group came to be viewed "problematic," and was terminated.

The major part of my time as a volunteer Humanist Canada board member at the time was to research the [need for ceremony](#) in the lives of humanists (Robertson, 2017b). As a consequence, I was invited to participate in a HAC thread initiated by the Humanists, Atheists and Agnostics of Manitoba on the need for humanist ceremonies. As expected, the discussion was cordial, informative and productive. I returned to the discussion group site in 2019, but this time the language was anything but cordial. Some members were calling on the moderators to ban others they called "racists," "alt-right," "white supremacists," and "anti-humanists." I read the offending posts. No one had advocated racism, white supremacy, or even conservative politics. Earlier, white academic activists who used such language to support what some called "cancel culture" had appropriated the term "woke" from black culture to imply those that did not share their views were "not awake." I told these Woke to keep the discussion civil. A couple of weeks later I found the former victims giving as good as they got, so I admonished them all. Over time non-Woke stopped participating. With no debate, the only new threads on the old site were pleas for donations from a humanist school in Uganda that was, at the time, partially funded through Humanist Canada. To stimulate discussion, I posted an [article by a police officer](#) (Wilson, 2020) arguing against the then current campaign to defund the police. I invited comments, but as a moderator offered no opinion. One commentator stated that articles published in Quillette Magazine should not appear in a humanist forum. I set up a separate thread to discuss whether we should censor articles based on their magazine of origin.

Several articles from Quillette were posted but none promoted an ideology of racism, sexism, or hate, and I refused to impugn motives based on some subjectively held notion of "dog-whistling." One participant repeatedly expressed insult over my refusal to share my own views on the RCMP officer's article. I agreed to do so, but under my own name outside of the moderator role. The resultant exchange was reasoned and civil.

Two posts in a different discussion thread implied, without evidence, that humanist Steven Pinker was associated with pedophilia. I viewed this as promoting hatred against an individual, and in the role of moderator, I deleted the posts. During the subsequent discussion, I informed

one of the posters that he could appeal my decision to the site administrator, but he replied that he would approach “Martin,” the Humanist Canada president, instead.

During the ensuing months the HAC site generated more comments than the official Humanist Canada page despite having one third the members, and discussions were mostly civil. Then, in early August 2020, another moderator who had only recently become involved, cancelled a participant’s right to post under circumstances I challenged. The moderator explained:

The reason I blocked Ullrich Fischer from (sic) the HAC site had nothing to do with the nature of the content he was posting, but for targeting another member for harassment by systematically going through her previous comments on previous posts and replying to each one. (Sassan Sanei, e-mail, Aug. 6/20)

Ullrich had posted “five or six” replies to separate posts mostly responding to comments the other member had posted to him. For example, she had advised “Please don’t post alt-right material to a Humanist Group” to which he had responded, “Please don’t define as alt-right everything which disagrees with you about anything.” I restored Ullrich’s privileges because due process had not been followed. I explained that we could create a rule limiting the number of posts a member could make, but in fairness we would need to communicate such a rule to everyone in advance, and no one should be cancelled after a first offense. I also pointed out that the alleged “victim” here had called yet another member a “terrible human being” and had sent that member a private message calling her a “condescending bitch,” so if anyone should be cancelled it should be this alleged victim. Sassan then apologized to Ullrich admitting:

It was wrong of me to do that without informing you why the action was taken, giving you an opportunity to respond, or discussing it with other moderators. I’m sorry, and I promise you it will not happen again.

Sassan took exception to my use of the term “Woke.” While the term had been appropriated from U.S. black culture, he explained the word was now used as a slur directed against the appropriators. I agreed to use an alternate term “Identitarian Left” instead.

In early September I deleted four posts that consisted of name calling, swearing, or belittling of people. In keeping with our protocol, I notified the other moderators. Sassan re-instated two of the posts explaining in an email, “The idea of a safe space does not extend to non-victimized or non-marginalized persons.” One member whose post remained deleted after calling another “a racist piece of shit,” declared that I, the moderator, favoured “raping and torturing children.” When asked for evidence, he posted that I had deleted the incriminating posts.

At a meeting that included the Humanist Canada president, Sassan and me, it was decided to remove all reference to Humanist Canada in the old discussion group as the discussions were “hurting our brand.” I thought it odd that the site administrator had not been invited to this meeting. Nonetheless, the Identitarian Left still insisted that anything stated on the site represented Humanist Canada policy. In keeping with the discussion at our meeting, I posted:

This is not the official webpage of Humanist Canada and the opinions expressed here do not conform to any official statement or position. This is an open discussion group for humanists with a wide variety of opinions and perspectives. We ask that participants to this forum talk to each other respectfully.

One poster became so offended by this statement that he called on the president, Martin Frith, “to do something with me.” In the meantime, Sassan suspended comments on a thread in support of

ex-Muslims who had become humanists, and he suspended the person who started the thread for the next 30 days with the ominous warning “if another admin approves (his posts) I will remove them.” As it had become apparent that the two moderators were following different rules, I decided to bring it to the Humanist Canada board for resolution. I proposed that Sassan and I each resign to be replaced by a former Humanist Canada treasurer who could be seen as a neutral moderator using the following rules:

1. No racist, sexist or hate speech permitted;
2. Bullying including name-calling is not permitted;
3. Posts that contain racist, sexist or hate speech or otherwise exhibit bullying will be removed;
4. Participants who have posts removed will be advised of the reason for the removal;
5. Persistent abuse of the rules will result in an individual losing their posting privileges.

Sassan’s response at the board meeting was to demand an apology from me for using the term “Identitarian Leftist!” The board decided to refer the matter to its social media committee. I reverted to using the term “Woke.”

Four new discussion group members identified as transgender. When Sassan posted a “trans rights are human rights” banner in the forum, one trans person accused him of appropriating trans issues to advance his organization. He replied that his post was necessary because many humanists had been posting “transphobic” and “hateful” statements. I had not seen any such statements, and I asked Sassan to produce them. He said he had deleted them, but as moderator, I had access to all deletions, and found none. Sassan subsequently deleted as “transphobic hate speech” an article [written by a transwoman](#), that was critical of J.K. Rowling. I did not consider her call for dialogue to be hate speech, so I reposted it under my name. The initial discussion on this article was civil, but it was interrupted by an individual who called me a transphobe and a bigot without any arguments supporting those assertions. Ze also contacted me on my private messenger service with threats to have me removed as moderator. Ze subsequently posted on the personal Facebook of another member, “You are completely uneducated. Ignorant. Privileged and bigoted.” As this individual had six similar posts removed earlier, I cancelled the member’s posting privileges. Sassan reinstated the person without contacting me. I cancelled the person again. I then discovered I was cancelled as moderator. I appealed to the site administrator but he had been cancelled too! The president suggested we sort this problem out at the social committee meeting he would schedule.

The dam burst. Transactivists and their allies attacked non-Woke with the same derision that had prompted me to become an active moderator the year earlier. Three participants defended me saying that they had searched my postings and did not find any posted by me that were anti-trans. Woke replied that I had removed the offending posts. One of the Woke organized a letter writing campaign. Sassan defended this behaviour stating, “The member(s) in question was (were) not harassing anybody. They were standing up and speaking out *against* the endless stream of hateful, transphobic commentary and bullying that has dominated the group in recent weeks.” No examples of such hateful, transphobic, or bullying comments were given.

The HAC discussion group was shut down with the rationale that social media necessarily degenerates into such divisive name calling. I believed this was likely true at the time, but the New Enlightenment Project (NEP) established its own [Facebook discussion forum](#) in 2021, and

it has proven to be a safe place in which humanists can have respectful, informative and civil conversations about controversial topics.

Sassan had not been authorized to terminate a moderator or the discussion group administrator. President Frith was determined to ensure that this matter would not be discussed by the Humanist Canada board, and he invited me to attend a “discussion group post-mortem.” After waiting for Martin who failed to attend, Sassan apologized for his actions to the cancelled administrator and myself. I thought he should apologize to the board because he had broken a board protocol, but the former administrator suggested that we should move on to educate humanists about the threat of Wokism.

This was my first direct experience observing Wokism in action. The Woke accused those who disagreed with them of being anti-humanist. People who said Canada’s first prime minister should not be blamed for things that happened well after his death were accused of favoring the torturing and raping of children. Feminists who want to ensure biological females have safe spaces were accused of wanting to deny transsexuals right to exist. Those who defended their positions were accused of harassment or bullying. There were thus two types of humanists represented: the Woke who viewed freedom of speech, science, logic and reason as ‘white, male ways of knowing’ in opposition to their “anti-racist” narratives; and, those grounded in the Enlightenment view that we can learn about objective reality through careful observation, science, reason and logic. To these Enlightenment humanists, freedom of speech acts as an antidote to dogma and is a means of checking our own subjectively held biases. Those who coined the term “The Enlightenment” implied that those who disagreed with their approach were unenlightened, but in my book, *The Evolved Self* (Robertson, 2020), I argue that these values flow from the individualism inherent in having a self, and that this self is both cross-cultural and ancient. The Enlightenment was not about educating unenlightened people so much as removing cultural constraints on the powers of mind. From this lens, Wokism is a reactionary movement seeking to re-impose such constraints.

I came to the conclusion that Wokism is not a coherent ideology but amalgam of partially assimilated and [conflicting belief systems](#) (Robertson, 2021). It replaces the economic ruling class of Marxism with the racial designation “white.” It uses anti-Marxist postmodernism to “deconstruct” all beliefs with no rationale given as to why its own dogma is exempt from such deconstruction. Its attack on science and reason is copied from Martin Heidegger (1962), but it claims to be anti-fascist. It claims allegiance to social justice but ignores the egalitarian basis of the civil rights movement upon which social justice is built. The Woke claim to be anti-racist but promote the racialization of society through identity politics. They claim to be anti-capitalist while being embraced by the largest corporations in the world. They are convinced of their moral superiority, but are prepared to act unethically to defeat their opponents. These contradictions help explain the psychology of the people I observed.

Sassan had been extremely deferential to the transperson who accused him of using trans-issues to further an agenda. Sometimes referred to as “victim culture” (Campbell & Manning, 2014, 2016; Gabay et al., 2020; Haufman, 2020), Wokism establishes a hierarchy of identity groups with members of some groups presumed to have suffered greater victimization thereby acquiring greater moral entitlement. One would think that white males would be at the bottom of this hierarchy, but they are given a special role. Several times white males in the discussion group would state that they were “giving voice” to those “without voice.” This gives them a leadership position in which they engage in aggressive attacks on others as evidence of overcoming their

own “whiteness.” On numerous occasions I observed Woke amending their posts after the discussion so as to make themselves appear more effective.

In periods of high emotion, Woke act as though they are subject to a moral panic, but individuals cannot sustain such energy indefinitely. I have demonstrated how complexes of cultural memes can attach to the self of an individual acting as a kind of [mind virus](#) (Robertson, 2017a), and I [subsequently](#) determined that Wokism meets this criteria (Robertson, 2021). Put simply, the Woke virus attaches itself to the selves of individuals so that a challenge to Wokism is felt as an existential attack on oneself. Like a primitive religion, Wokism protects its flock from alternate ideas by censoring individuals, declaring media it does not control to be racist, and by denying objective reality. If there is no objective reality, then science, empiricism and reason are empty culturally sanctioned performances legitimate only insofar as they promote Wokism.

Like a secret cult, Wokism may not be named and attempts to name it are deemed to be “slurs.” The Woke would prefer to be known as “Left” or “Progressives;” yet we know there are many people who identify with the Left who embrace science, reason, and free speech. We also know that progressivism is an Enlightenment doctrine that peoples’ lives can be improved incrementally. By this measure a leading progressive is Steven Pinker (2012, 2018), a humanist whom the Woke have repeatedly denounced.

Every cult needs some means of identifying authentic members, and the Woke do this through the inventive use of language. For example, the word “Latinx” is not used by Hispanic people, and it is not used by Woke talking to Hispanic people. It is used by Woke talking through Hispanic people to other Woke. The word “systemic” is thrown in before words like “racism,” “sexism,” and “oppression,” but it is not used as an adjective because the Woke never explain how systems work to establish these problems. The word “problematic,” is used in preference to the word “problem” so as to appear more “systemic.” Similarly words like micro-aggression, intersectionality, and cisgender are not needed for communication, but signify that the user is Woke.

In the final analysis, Wokism is about power. The Woke have taken over universities, school boards, media, non-government organizations and government agencies for the purpose of creating more Woke. Although they were successful in disabling and shutting down an open humanist discussion group, the Woke were not finished with Humanist Canada. Enlightenment humanists need to recognize the challenge to our movement and to update our understandings in light of modern conditions.

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Year of the Virus: Understanding the contagion effects of wokism

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The novel coronavirus had not yet been recognized when Yasmin Mohammed (2019) published her memoir blaming “Western Liberalism” for failing to protect her from forcible confinement and beatings she suffered as a child. Following an intervention by child welfare authorities, a Canadian judge acknowledged her suffering but refused to intervene in her parent’s “cultural (Muslim) ways.” Early the following year journalist Margaret Wentz was removed from an honorary position with a Canadian university following a social media mobbing in which she was accused of being a racist and anti-feminist (Wentz, 2020). “Due process” which would have allowed her to defend herself from the allegations was not given. In March, 2020, demonstrations spread throughout North America and into other continents following the death of George Floyd while he was in police custody in Minneapolis, USA. Systemic racism was assumed to be the cause. During the same year many schools and colleges in the United States ended achievement testing as a requirement for admittance, and employers paid for employee re-education sessions.

Pluckrose and Lindsay (2020b) named the movement behind these interconnected events “Critical Social Justice,” but this paper develops an argument that these events were influenced by an underlying social contagion that can be better understood as a mind virus. In developing this argument, it is first necessary to describe the “body” that may be infected by such a virus. The self is proposed as that body in the next section along with an evolutionary account of its development. In the second section of this paper I apply a model that allows us to recognize a mind virus to the modern cultural phenomenon of “wokeness.”

The self as a mental analogue to the body

The self is core to such psychological concepts as self-esteem, self-concept, and self-empowerment. In this section, I describe how this evolved cultural construct became the paradigm of practice within the profession and how cultural units may attach themselves to this self. I discuss the historic tension between collectivism that gives definition to ourselves as a social species and the individualism inherent in a self capable of volitional planning and consciousness. I conclude this section by reviewing how we might determine this self has become infected by other units of culture that serve to appropriate the self’s resources.

Most current schools of psychotherapy emphasize individual choice with respect to personal development with the implication that selfed individuals are making these choices. Classical behaviourists (Skinner, 1974) presented an alternative view that consciousness and the self that has it are unnecessary distractions preventing a scientific examination of behaviour. In keeping with this deterministic view, behaviourism focused on helping patients using classical and operant conditioning as opposed to cognitive processing. Behaviourism delivered impressive results in treating such conditions as depression, anxiety, alcoholism, trauma, and conduct disorder, and in so doing, providing concrete evidence that we are a species whose behaviours are determined by genetic and environmental factors. Despite these successes, behaviourism failed to become dominant in the profession. As we shall see, this failure was grounded in a

species-wide consensus on the mental attributes of humanness. Its successes, however, suggest a way that mind viruses could operate to undermine those attributes.

Thomas Kuhn (1970) described psychology as a “proto-science” for failing to develop a unifying paradigm that would take it out of the domain of philosophy and into the domain of science. Hutcheon (1996) identified three “formations” that potentially could have become such a paradigm: Psychoanalysis, genetic developmentalism, and behaviourism. She identified behaviourism as the most fruitful of the three; however, she concluded it failed “because it attacks the very roots of our cultural assumptions” (p. 261). These cultural assumptions include: 1) human beings have minds, 2) minds presuppose the presence of beliefs, and 3) beliefs are only possible if there is the notion of objective evidence by which we can determine truth.

Many academics have endorsed the determinist alternative to these cultural assumptions, that consciousness, free will and the self are illusions (Blackmore, 1999; Coyne, 2012; Cronin, 2003; DiCarlo, 2010), but the practice of psychotherapy has proceeded in the opposite direction. By the twenty-first century, even those who still called themselves behaviourists were talking about personal choices and cognitive distortions, thus sounding very much like the therapists who now called themselves cognitive-behaviourists. Classical behaviourism had encountered an already-established paradigm that humans are thinking animals with minds capable of logical consistency and rational evidence-based assessment. While a profession that is united by these notions could assimilate deterministic methods, it could not capitulate to a determinist ontology because to do so would undermine the foundational assumption of that we are thinking, rational beings.

A mind capable of having beliefs necessarily posits evidence for those beliefs—evidence that, in turn, presupposes a reality that the mind can understand. Moreover, a mind with the ability to assess evidence, independently and temporally, could not exist without self-awareness. But the self, defined by these capabilities, represents a relatively recent cultural adaptation (Robertson, 2020) that embodies a tension between individualism (with its sense of volition, uniqueness, constancy, and reflectivity) and collectivism (with its sense of community, social interest, attachment and productivity). The two case studies that follow illustrate the self in map form, and how that self may change.

Therapeutic change to the self of two clients

“Suzie” (Robertson, 2011) had attempted suicide five times before I saw her. When established methods of treating suicide ideation failed to bring necessary results (cognitive behavioural therapy, Adlerian psychotherapy, narrative therapy, and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing), I suggested that we map her self to find out what was blocking treatment. We began by identifying units of culture that represented who she was. Each referent word, or meme, included connotative meaning, affect and associated behaviours. Using the idea that connotative, affective, or behavioural similarities between memes could be represented as links, we produced the map in figure 1.

Few memes in figure 1 suggest individual volition or social interest. A meme labeled “depressed person” is central and attempts to remove it prematurely had destabilized the entire structure. We began to move or remove memes supporting the placement of “depressed person” as central while building a new core with a focus on social interest and volition. Suzie could now visualize a better self and accept evidence that it was true. Her suicide risk receded. She found achievement and recognition when she relocated to a new community.

When I presented this case study to a doctoral class, one participant declared that I was simply doing cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). From that point of view, the map suggested cognitive re-framing, supplemented by behavioural “homework assignments.” These challenged negative memes such as “ugly” and supported a new “human rights” core. A narrative therapist in class disagreed, suggesting that memes provided the outline of a story, and I had helped my client write a better one. Actually, I began my career as an Adlerian psychotherapist. This anecdote illustrates that the self, as pictured here, is fundamental across psychotherapeutic schools of practice.

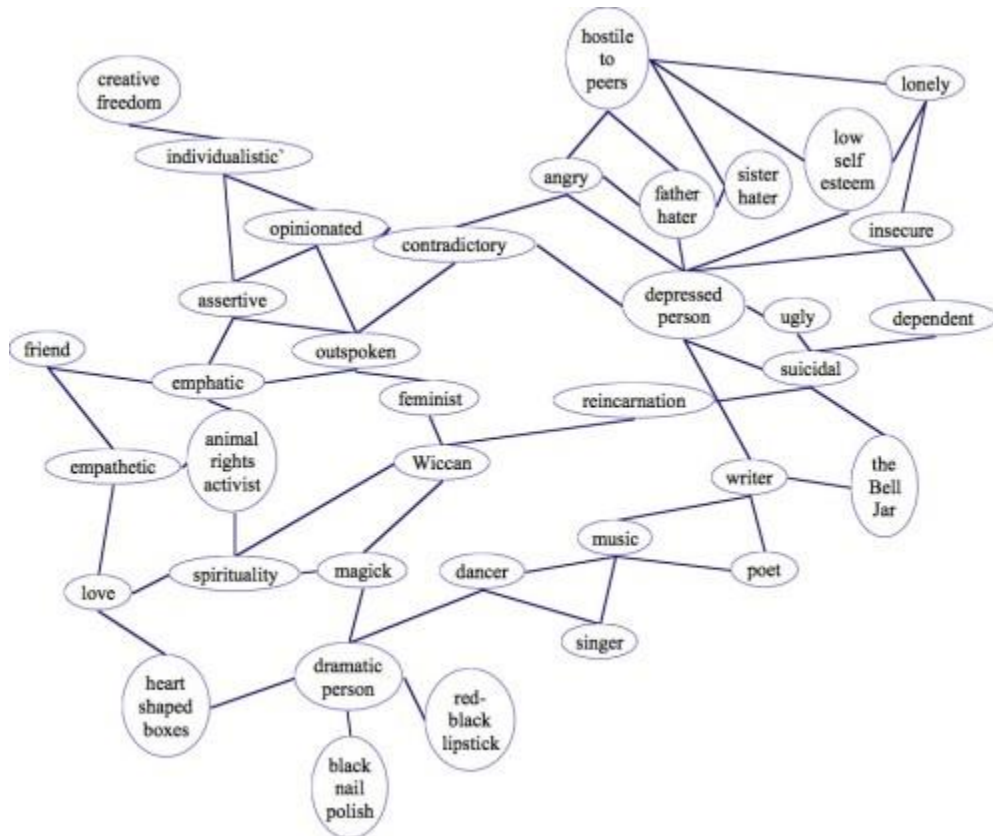


Figure 1: Initial self-map of a youth with suicide ideation, showing memes in relation to each other

About a decade after I worked with Suzie, another client, “Olivia” came to me with symptoms of PTSD after being raped by a friend during a night of heavy drinking (Robertson, 2016). After a month of CBT-informed treatment, she was able to return to work. Nonetheless, she acknowledged a personal history that included failed relationships, alcohol abuse and the loss of child custody. She asked for further psychotherapy, focused to become a better decision-maker. We began by developing the self-map represented in figure 2.

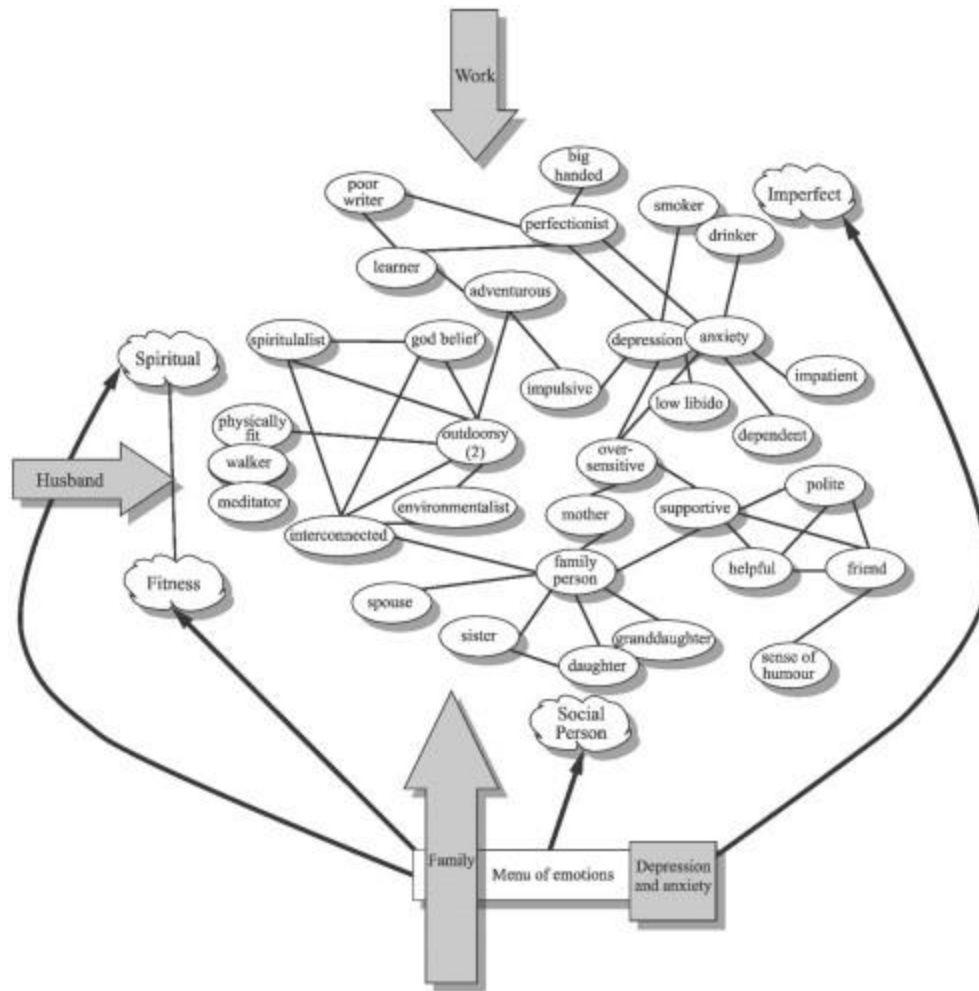


Figure 2: A self map of a woman suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder

Link to more legible image [here](#).

The bottom bar represents the biological forces that sometimes triggered various clusters of memes labeled “imperfect,” “spiritual / fitness” and “social self.” Thick arrows represent the influence of her family, spouse, and work on her self-definition. To the extent that biological and environmental forces control the structure of the self, we can say that it is “determined.” During the course of treatment, we were able to add or modify several memes in Olivia’s “imperfect self” giving her a more balanced identity. She developed a sense of empowerment and volitional control, both of which she used to maintain her commitment to behavioural change. She no longer defined herself as a depressed person, although she acknowledged that everyone experiences sadness and depression on occasion. She developed new associations between clusters that gave her the ability to choose to not ruminate on her deficiencies. We added a second bar, below the menu of emotions, to recognize her “psychological characteristics” such as intelligence, introversion, and self-assurance.

Significantly, Olivia now found restrictive the very relationships that she had found to be supportive during her bout with PTSD. Her spouse now accused her of wanting to be better than him, possibly when she refused to join him on his drinking binges. Her employer refused to allow her enough latitude to make decisions on the job. Her mother would unexpectedly enter

her house searching for the drugs that she assumed were stashed there. Olivia came to the insight that her spouse, employer, and parents had not changed—but that she had changed. If she wanted to keep her newly minted self, therefore, she would have to move to another community. With the help of distance-counselling and some new friends, she re-established herself elsewhere and even negotiated new boundaries with her family.

A determined species unchained and re-chained

As can see from the examples of these two clients, the social environment is a powerful determinant of who we are. Determinists would say that psychotherapists, directed by their programming, overpower the other determinants that keep their clients' old selves in place. Determinists would have more difficulty, however, in explaining why both clients chose to move to other communities *without* the advice of their therapist. To argue that therapists unconsciously push their clients in such directions requires the assumption of unseen forces. A simpler explanation would be that *most* of our decisions are determined but that, with hard work and mental resources, we can make decisions at variance from our memetic and genetic programming (Robertson, 2017a).

In *The Evolved Self* (Robertson, 2020), I argue that volition and temporal constancy combined with a more primal self as recently as the beginning of the first millennium BCE. Our sense of constancy, that we are in some important sense the same person over time, allows us to think about our selves in remembered events while considering how we might have influenced alternative outcomes. Using a similar mechanism, we can imagine our selves in the future and predict outcomes on the basis of available evidence. What constitutes evidence will necessarily, at least in the first instance, be learned. If having a better grasp of reality ultimately favours better outcomes then cultures will evolve in that direction. For example, the scientific method, which originated in post-Enlightenment Europe, has brought about a revolution in new knowledge. The method itself has been appropriated by most non-European cultures where “culture” is defined as current practices, values and artifacts.

Beliefs are possible only in the mind of someone who accepts that there is some way to differentiate truth from falsehood; and that implies an objective reality. To change a belief about oneself, one must first take oneself as an object that can be examined. Unfortunately clients cannot change who they are at will. Like Suzie, they often resist changing even dysfunctional selves. They need evidence to support desired changes; otherwise it feels as though they are merely play-acting.

The rejection of classical behaviourism by psychotherapists, despite its demonstrated efficacy, flowed from deeply held cultural assumptions about what it means to be human. The combination of behaviourism with cognitivism suggests a form of compatibilism, that the concepts of free will and determinism are not mutually exclusive. The ideal of free will became part of our self-definition flowing from culturally evolved changes to the self (Robertson, 2020). While assumptions of personal volition, continuity, and reason became the benchmark of what it means to be human, we do not always attain this ideal. Psychologists are in the business of teaching clients the skills that they need to approximate this self. To Sagan (1996) that ideal involved doing science: “Every time we exercise self-criticism, every time we test our idea against the outside world, we are doing science. When we are self-indulgent and uncritical, when we confuse hopes with facts, we slide into pseudoscience and superstition” (p. 27).

Taking the objective view, as is necessary in science, does not come naturally to the human species. Jaynes (1976) said pre-Homeric Greeks relied on pre-programmed cultural responses to triggering events and when an event occurred that had not been prepared for in their cultural programming they reacted in a random, sometimes schizophrenic way. After a study of early Egyptian hieroglyphics, Johnson (2003) concluded that the early Egyptians did not have minds, as we would now define the term. A simpler explanation is that they did not have the kind of self that we take for granted today.

The individualism that forms a part of what I call “the modern self” (Robertson, 2020) was a potential threat to the stability of pre-modern societies made up primarily of people with a different kind of self. Since the self is a culturally mediated construct, by controlling available memes, collectivist societies can limit the possibilities available for self-construction. Acceptance of such constraints can be supported by appeals to authority, particularly religious authority. The Axial Age of the first millennium BCE (Jaspers, 1951; Mahoney, 1991) produced major world religions that were concerned with regulating the self in some ways. Early Confucian thought dealt with the moral development of the self in relation to the collectivity infusing it with a sense of duty to ancestors (Wu, 2017). Hindu thought divided society into a series of castes with a full education available only to the Brahmin caste. The Buddhist doctrine of “no-self” required initiates to place themselves under the direction of masters who represent the Buddha himself. Like Judaism, Christianity, has held that people must renounce the self, because human reasoning is faulty and true knowledge is divinely inspired. These teachings are consistent with a hypothesis that while the presence of people who could engage in individual volition and planning were valued, their abilities needed to be regulated.

Although the medieval Roman Catholic Church encouraged the practice of science that was consistent with its theology, the Protestant Reformation coupled with the re-learning of classical Greek philosophy in the scientific Renaissance of the sixteenth century led to the Enlightenment that began with Descartes, Bacon and Newton in the seventeenth. This Enlightenment did not invent individualism; it proclaimed that the individualism already inherent in the self that allowed for the determination of objective reality was good. Since a healthy self also requires relationships with others in the form of social interest, collective identity and intimacy, this development did not spell the end of collectivism, and each “individualist” society has retained or created ways of expressing communal or group identification.

In *The Evolved Self*, I argue that the struggle between collectivism and individualism occurs, in the first instance, within each person’s self. I argue also that, for the most part, we remain the determined beings that we have been throughout most of our history as a species; but also beings with the capacity to reflectively reprogram ourselves by acting on reasons that matter to us as individuals. If we view this conscious self that is capable of such reflective thought^[3] as analogous to the body, then we need to consider that memes and meme complexes (which are not part of the self but nonetheless exist in culture) can be deleterious to it. These meme complexes would be analogous to viruses that can enter the body.

The emancipation of the self was not welcomed by everyone. People with functional selves face responsibility, after all, for their own well-being. They must realistically assess their circumstances, selecting those that would provide meaning and purpose, but also implement plans to assure their own happiness. My private practice is beset with clients who would rather place the responsibility for their own well-being on others. In his examination of totalitarian movements following World War II, Eric Hoffer (1966/1951) noted, “The frustrated follow a

leader less because of their faith that he is leading them to a promised land than because of their immediate feeling that he is leading them away from their unwanted selves” (p. 110).

Building on the religious trope that our selves are inadequate, Martin Heidegger (1962) deconstructed science and reason by claiming that only one who is “Dasein” could know ultimate truth. “Dasein,” in Heidegger’s idiosyncratic usage, includes being present simultaneously in the past, present and future which only a few can achieve. He named himself and the fuehrer as Dasein. German psychologist Eric Fromm (1969) described the relationship between the totalitarian dynamic and the self:

There is the wish to submit to an overwhelmingly strong power, to annihilate the self, besides the wish to have power over helpless beings. This masochistic side of the Nazi ideology and practices is most obvious with the respect to the masses. They are told again and again: the individual is nothing and does not count. The individual should accept this personal insignificance, dissolve himself to a higher power, and then feel proud in participating in the strength and glory of this higher power. (pp. 257, 256)

It is frightening to consider that if Suzie had lived in pre-war Germany, a Nazi sympathizer could have suggested not only that she needed to accept her sense of personal insignificance but also that she could do so most effectively by identifying her self with glory of the Aryan race. Incorporating a new ideological or religious meme into one’s self, moreover, includes incorporating whatever attaches to that meme. In this example, Suzie would have felt Nazi militarism, anti-Semitism, and fuehrer worship as essential to her self. If both the Nazi and Suzie were caught in the same contagion, then we could say that one passed a mind virus to the other. In an earlier article (Robertson, 2017b), I listed four conditions necessary for diagnosing such a virus:

A mind virus will result in an observable change or transition in self-definition, one that is neither planned nor related to self-betterment;

The change must involve a diminution or negation of the modern self or its component parts;

The change must involve an appropriation of personal resources for the purpose of spreading the meme cluster in question; and,

The change is likely marked by considerable and uncharacteristic emotional valence.

Is wokism a mind-virus contagion?

The first section of this paper examined the structure of the self. I then proposed an evolutionary understanding of that structure and concluded with four conditions that are needed to satisfy a diagnosis of a mind virus that could be said to infect this self. Before applying those conditions to wokism in this second section, I define the term and explain why it is preferred to other labels sometimes used. Each of these labels are examined in turn: (1) postmodernism; (2) identity politics; (3) neo-Marxism; and (4) social justice (as a movement).

Postmodernism, the view that all knowledge is “socially constructed” and a product of power relationships, provides a method for the woke to attack and discredit competing beliefs. Objective evidence cannot be used to counter these woke beliefs since it is assumed that even science and reason amount to nothing other than a “white, male way of knowing” (Strong, 2002) and is, therefore, a conspiracy to oppress others. Tellingly, however, since they never deconstruct

wokism itself, it cannot be said that it is completely postmodern. It is more like a religious faith, something postmodernists considered to be a grand meta-narrative.

Identity politics incorporates the tenet that people are defined by the oppression that they have endured as members of their own races or other identity groups. Advocates do not apply this analysis to all groups. They describe Jews as white oppressors despite 2,000 years of anti-Semitic oppression. They describe East Asians as “honorary whites,” moreover, because in the United States these U.S. Americans are statistically ahead of actual whites on measures of academic achievement and income. Since identity politics is selectively applied, wokism cannot contribute to a general understanding of racism or oppression.

Most woke people identify with “the Left” and are sometimes referred to as “Neo-Marxists,” but postmodernism classified Marxism as a modernist “grand narrative” (Lyotard, 1984). Wokism appropriated Marx’s theory of class conflict where the “white race” is assigned the place of the capitalist or ruling class. By replacing Marx’s idea of class conflict with cultural warfare they ascribe class solidarity to one’s racial, gender or other assigned oppressed group. Thus, a black person who identifies with non-black workers might be accused of “false consciousness” which is, of course, a reversal of actual Marxism. Instead of striving to eradicate the capitalist class the logic of woke-Marxism would be to eradicate “whiteness” or “maleness.”[4]

The social-justice movements that began in the 1960s aimed at eliminating barriers faced by members of disadvantaged groups. The goal of equal opportunity would permit people, irrespective of sex or racial background to advance on the basis of their motivation and ability. Wokism appropriated the rhetoric of social justice. But by insisting on equal *outcomes*, instead of equal opportunities, they have devalued merit and work thus reversing the original goals of the social justice movements.

Wokism represents an inconsistent application of various historical, and sometimes conflicting, conceptual paradigms. I now examine this movement for the four conditions outlined in the previous section for determining the presence of a mind-virus.

Condition One: Change in Individual Self-Definition

The form of identity politics, on which wokism relies heavily, gives high status to recognized victim groups—which is to say non-whites, non-heterosexuals and non-males. Moreover, it gives even higher status to people who are simultaneously members of several victim groups under the rubric “intersectionality.” Competition between victim groups for greater recognition rewards people for identifying and fixating on perceived grievances (Noor, Shnabel, Halabi, & Nadler, 2012). One study of university students (Gabay, Hameiri, Rubel-Lifschitz, & Nadler, 2020) identified an emergent interpersonal-victimhood personality type characterized by a pathological need for recognition, difficulty empathizing with others, feelings of moral superiority, and a thirst for vengeance. The study noted that those who have this personality type “lash out” when others question their victimhood or challenge their self-image of moral superiority. Increasing numbers of these self-identified victims create a culture of victimhood in which “the aggrieved actively seek the support of third parties as well as those that focus on oppression” (Campbell & Manning, 2014 p. 692). This culture of group victimhood is gradually supplanting a culture based on individual dignity.

Woke identity politics holds that members of the “white race” are *collectively and innately* oppressors, which makes them analogous to the capitalist or bourgeois class in Marxism

(Campbell & Manning, 2014; Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002; Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020b). Because it is assumed, in wokism, that white males have benefitted from “privilege” both racially and sexually, they are not allowed to claim victim status even though they may be victims in many ways. Yet, white males are visibly active in the woke movement. I would expect their personalities and self-definitions to vary from those of other woke people. Here is a case study of woke white male personality based on my personal “lived experience” as a moderator of two humanist discussion groups in 2020.

The first discussion group was “open” in that any member of the group was allowed to post any article or topic providing they had not been previously banned from doing so. Although membership in the group varied between 1,500 and 1,600, active participants on any given post rarely numbered more than 20 except for the most controversial ones. Wokists were active on most controversial posts, and most of these activists were, judging from their profile pictures, white males.

When I actively began to moderate this group, I found woke members swearing at people who disagreed with them, calling them racists, “alt-righters,” and “white supremacists.” The woke members frequently suggested that the moderators should ban such people for not being true humanists. I scrolled through the relevant conversations and found that no one had posted anything that advocated racism or white supremacy. I developed a set of rules to encourage civil discourse and announced that I would delete posts that expressed hatred toward any person or any group. I announced that name-calling would be considered a form of expressed hatred.

“Bill” was probably already angry with me for deleting a post in which he called someone “a racist piece of shit” for suggesting that the authorities should not remove statues of Canada’s first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. Macdonald, who gave Amerindian people in Ontario the vote and provided food to ward off starvation, also contracted with four Christian denominations to provide education. Malnutrition, physical and sexual abuses were subsequently found in many of these Indian Residential Schools. I suggested to Bill that Macdonald should not be judged for events that occurred without his knowledge well after his death. His reply was that I was “completely without conscience” and that I favoured “raping and torturing children.”

In a second humanist discussion group,[5] a Humanist Canada board member posted an article about a woke mobbing of a retired professor who had suggested there should be limits to abortion. The woke demanded that this professor lose his emeritus status at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, but the board member suggested that humanists need to fight for the freedom of speech of those even with whom we may disagree. “Jason” replied:

I don’t want anti-choice misogynists to have a platform. Voltaire’s quote you used is nice when you have the privilege to utter it, but it doesn’t mean much to oppressed and marginalized voices to know that their oppressors will continue to get a seat at the table because of some bizarre equivocation around free speech.

Within wokism, Bill and Jason are powerful white males who are assumed to have “voice” and a duty to speak for recognized victim groups whose “voices” are “oppressed and marginalized.” Disagreement with some aspect of a woke narrative identifies oppressors who are to be confronted by the special-status white males. At any point, however, a member of a victim group could find their voice and accuse those who have adopted a saviour role of patronizing them. I observed this in the open humanist discussion group. A board member had created a post with the theme “trans rights are human rights.” A transperson accused the board member of using

trans issues to further a political agenda. The member both apologized deferentially and explained, without evidence, that humanists had been posting many transphobic statements which is why his post was needed.

Members of the woke movement who are also members of victim groups and who adopt a personality type consistent with woke narratives will assume a posture of moral superiority. Woke advocates who are white males can forestall negative intervention by these morally superior people by vigorously pursuing attacks on the non-woke coupled uncomplicated by nuance or compromise. We also need to consider the psychological benefits whites may obtain from a process Rene Girard described as “scapegoating” (Girard, 1989). Wokism has labeled whites to be an “oppressor race” with all members presumably guilty of benefiting from this oppressor status. White woke can temporarily transfer this guilt to a named scapegoat who then takes on the sins ascribed to this race. We have seen this process in the example of John A. Macdonald in Canada, attacks on Winston Churchill in Britain and on the founding fathers in the United States. As we will see in the subsequent discussion of woke mobbing, the process of scapegoating can be applied to anyone but in all cases it can only provide temporary psychological relief. While white males are more likely to be selected as a sacrificial scapegoat, as the sacrificial crisis becomes more severe categories start to break down and the actual victim selected by mimetic violence could be anyone. During the height of the sacrifice, it will seem that the victim is to blame for everything.

As can be seen from the foregoing, wokism has the effect of assigning specific personality characteristics to identity groups. While it may be that some people enter the woke movement with such personalities already expressed, the internal logic of wokism pressures individuals to conform to the personality assigned to their particular status.

Condition Two: Diminution of the Modern Self

The first section of this paper outlined how a healthy modern self includes the capacity for relationships with others in the form of social interest, collective identity and intimacy as well as more individualist aspects such as volition, uniqueness, continuity and reason. Combined, this self allows for the objective investigation of external reality. A negation of either our collectivist or individualist qualities would diminish this capacity.

In the humanist discussion groups that I monitored, woke members dismissed as racism or “transphobia” scientific research into the heritability of intelligence and rapid onset gender dysphoria. In doing so, they rely on the critical-social-justice trope that all knowledge is a function of power and is perpetrated by oppressive “discourses.” There is, of course, a contradiction in this argument in that if there is no objective reality, as has to be the case where what is taken as knowledge is a function of power, then there can be no basis to believe that critical social justice is true. In this, the woke are similar to Heidegger who also put limits on science and reason but advocated a “higher authority” to inform the masses as to ultimate truth. The woke present themselves as that higher authority.

A functioning society is impossible if everyone were to uniquely determine their own subjectively held individual realities. If objective knowledge is impossible, then an alternative reality acting in the place of a *Dasein* must be imposed on non-believers. Free speech is irrelevant in arriving at truth if truth is determined by that higher authority. Indeed, free speech, in such circumstances, is potentially dangerous for allowing other understandings of reality to compete for the minds of those who are to be led. Therefore, the woke have journalists fired,

have books and articles withdrawn from publication, “de-platform” speakers, and have professors fired for replacing ideological orthodoxy with heresy. The woke accuse those who fail to conform to their “reality,” of racism, sexism, or a host of new “phobias” that no psychologist would ever diagnose. All this is done in the name of those who allegedly lack “voices.”

The voice of former Sacramento Kings broadcaster Grant Napeer was also silenced. Asked his opinion of Black Lives Matter, he said that “All lives matter, every single one.” In an apology, he stated that he had never imagined how the phrase could be offensive to anyone. He was fired on June 2, 2020. Anyone who believes that all lives matter, of course, cannot be racist, but people to whom the woke had given this label had chanted the phrase at counter-demonstrations. As a sports broadcaster, Napeer could be forgiven for not knowing this history. Entertainers, writers, and politicians have also been forced to apologize for uttering this *anti-racist* sentiment. On October 8, 2020 an aboriginal Inuit cabinet minister, Patterk Netser, was removed as housing minister in the territory of Nunavut after posting “all lives matter” on his Facebook page.

The woke list of proscribed phrases includes “sexual preference,” “colour blind” (when referencing racism), “not racist,” and “sex change.” New words such as “intersectionality,” “heteronormativity,” “cisgender,” “microaggression” and “LGBTQ+” are de rigueur. Old words and phrases, moreover, take on new meanings. During the 1970s, for example, “systemic racism” was used in connection with organizational policies and practices that resulted in discrimination. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) during that era had a policy that police officers had to wear a standard issue hat. The effect of that policy was that devout Sikhs, who wear a turban, could not become police officers. That policy was changed. A policy of racially profiling people to be stopped to be searched would also be an example of systemic racism.

In June 2020 RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki said she had looked at her organization’s policies and procedures and could not find any examples of systemic racism. The prime minister’s office, using a different definition, forced her to recant her views. This more recent woke definition of systemic racism is that if there are differential outcomes, for example in arrest rates, then systemic racism must be the cause. Such a simplistic analysis ignores the need to research complex socio-economic factors that could lead to a higher crime rate over which the police have no control.

The picture that emerges is wokism as a kind of filter, an overlay on actual events. Because we think primarily in words when interpreting events, the woke emphasis on language and language policing is an attempt to force the general public to accept the interpretations this filter produces. Thus, wokism is not merely about restricting freedom of speech, it is about restricting freedom of thought. In trying to control, restrict or inhibit our ability to reason, wokism diminishes these very capacities of the self returning us to a form of pre-Enlightenment collectivism. From this perspective, wokism is not revolutionary but reactionary.

Condition Three: Appropriation of Individual Resources

When a woke participant in one of my humanist discussion groups amended his comments after others had already responded, I viewed it as a personal idiosyncrasy. After three participants did the same thing, however, I took notice. These actions pointed to a psychological means by which wokism appropriates time and resources.

The term “woke” originated as a self-referent by adherents of this odd mixture of postmodernism, Hegelianism, Marxism, “social justice” and religion. Appropriated from African

American slang, it represented a slur against those who were not sufficiently “awake” to accept their belief system. Like early Calvinists, who believed that they are predestined to join the “elect” and end up in heaven but still needed to continually demonstrate their piety as a way of proving their claim, the woke need to continually demonstrate their superior insight. In this example, they did not need to change the record to help the unwoke, with whom the conversation had already ended, but to demonstrate to other woke who might come across that record that they are indeed one of the elect. In “cancel culture” individual posts and records are examined dating back decades so that enemies of wokism can be eviscerated and publically shamed. This results in an impulse for woke advocates to not leave any record that might imply they are not sufficiently woke.

One can display one’s woke virtue by participating in internet and media mobbing. In November 2019, Don Cherry, a sports broadcaster who had been baiting liberals for decades on his *Hockey Night in Canada* program, decided to promote Canada’s Remembrance Day tradition of buying poppies to support programs for veterans. He lamented that no one from Toronto was buying poppies anymore and opined, “You people, you love our way of life, you love our milk and honey, at least you can pay a couple bucks for a poppy or something like that.” Within two days, the Canada Broadcast Standards Council received so many complaints about Cherry’s “racist” comment that their website went down. But this was not a popular public reaction. Only those using the woke mental filter can see racism in a request to buy poppies. Because the woke were not politically predisposed to watching Cherry in the first place, it is unlikely that many of those who complained actually listened to the program. But Cherry lost his job.

Another venue for virtue signaling involves participation in anti-racist demonstrations. Not all members of Black Lives Matter (BLM) are woke, but those who are, given their allegedly superior understanding, try to occupy its leadership positions. Within three days of the killing of George Floyd by police on May 25, 2020, BLM demonstrations occurred in at least 30 U.S. American cities and others around the world. Eight thousand protesters demonstrated in Portland, Oregon, on May 28. Rioting that included breaking store windows, looting, starting fires, and hurling projectiles at the police began the day after. A pattern of peaceful demonstrations by day and riots by night soon solidified. “Riots,” in this instance, were planned in advance. On Facebook and Twitter, the rioters found locations, times and instructions. They were provided food, medical attention, gas masks and shields to protect them from rubber bullets and tear gas. They were armed with modified lasers, fireworks, clubs, hockey sticks, hammers, and in one case, a chain saw.

Portland city council responded to demands to defund the police by cutting \$15 million from its police budget in June. On July 2, several federal policing agencies arrived in Portland to protect federal buildings and monuments. On July 15, Mayor Ted Wheeler said that the federal “troops” were responsible for provoking the violence and demanded their withdrawal. On July 18, rioters broke into the Municipal Police Association building, setting it on fire. On July 30, the federal police were withdrawn. Except for serious offences, rioters went free without bail. According to reporter Andy Ngo, some rioters were charged and released as many as five times.

In August, Wheeler stated that President Trump had caused the riots through his policies. On September 10, in keeping with the demands of protestors, Wheeler banned the use of tear gas by police. Trump was defeated in November, but the riots continued. Following a riot on New Year’s Day, 2021, Wheeler stated that his “good faith efforts at de-escalation have been met with ongoing violence and even scorn from radical Antifa and anarchists.”

Real revolutions are led by real revolutionaries who believe there is an objective reality outside of themselves, and they use that reality to plan. Violence in their world is connected to goals. It may be difficult but not impossible to negotiate with these realists. But Wheeler could not deal with people who have rejected the realist approach. A virus does not recognize compromise, only an opportunity to grow. From a viral perspective, that is what Wheeler provided with his various appeasements. Not that they would thank him. A woke group assaulted him in a Portland restaurant on January 6, 2021.

In this section I outlined a psychological mechanism explaining the extreme attention to detail exhibited by woke in making their presentations. I also reviewed part of a massive social upheaval that is only made possible through a substantial time and financial commitment by woke. Those woke who participate in riots are also risking their physical well-being. It is clear from this account that wokism involves the appropriation of considerable personal resources.

Condition Four: Emotional Valence

Wokism is a morality play involving an epic and enduring struggle between the forces of good and evil. In this respect, it resembles a fundamentalist form of religion. As Eric Hoffer (1966/1951) noted following World War II, “A mass movement can get along without a god but not without a devil. An abstract devil won’t do, it must be tangible. This is why Christians must demonize and dehumanize opponents.”

In *True Believers*, Hoffer (1966/1951) described a subset of people in each religion or ideology who cannot accept the idea that others, with very different beliefs, could have an equal claim to goodness. Minions of the devil in wokism are given names such as “alt-righters,” “racists” and “gender traitors.” But few people actually advocate white supremacy, support racism, or see themselves as traitors to their own genders. Wokists try to resolve the resultant cognitive dissonance by declaring statistical evidence itself to be a product of racism and by resorting to what Nathanson and Young (2006) called “linguistic inflation.” We have already discussed how calling on people to buy Remembrance Day poppies was seen as the hate crime of “racism.” The linguistically inflated hate crime of being a gender traitor was illustrated with an article by a transwoman posted on the “open” humanist discussion group previously mentioned. The article describes J.K. Rowling’s view that sharing safe spaces between women and transwomen is threatening for women as “overblown.” The author conceded, however, that some predatory men could potentially use their access (as transwomen) to gain access. She recommended that trans and feminist communities should negotiate a solution. A fellow moderator deleted the article on the grounds of “hate speech.” If suggesting even negotiation makes one a “gender traitor,” then any deviation at all from woke dogma is tantamount to complicity in evil. This cynical mentality creates a problem for woke people, because conventional wisdom necessarily changes over time. With no central organization to define or authorize such change, woke people protect themselves from internal criticism by being hyper-alert and over reactive.

Compassion and social interest are likely the initial factors by which the woke memplex attaches itself to the selves of most woke people. But the driving force behind their activism flows from a *moral panic*—which relies on the assertion that evil people, who must be stopped, are bent on oppressing others. A similar moral panic emerged in 1966 as the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

China’s policies had produced economic failure and widespread famine. A cadre around Chairman Mao Zedong concluded this was the fault of “bourgeois elements” in industry, in

government circles and even in the Communist Party. Believers conceded that many of these people were unconscious of their revisionism. Mao organized idealistic students, his “Red Guards,” to save the revolution. They began by revolting against their respective schools and cancelling classes. When huge demonstrations failed to produce the desired change, they began rooting out the evil, identifying members of the “bourgeoisie” by their lifestyle, use of language, family backgrounds, and how well they applied Chairman Mao’s “little red book” of quotations. The Red Guards publically humiliated offenders, who typically lost their jobs. Mob violence was common and killed many people. Academics and intellectuals ended up in remote “re-education camps.” Vandals destroyed books, statues, monasteries, museums and anything associated with “old culture.”

Moral panics in the United States and Canada show some affinity with wokism. Even though almost everyone agreed in the 1920s that drunkenness was a problem, the Prohibition movement claimed that even a little alcohol was evil. Despite good intentions, Prohibition was a windfall for criminal gangs. And with the authorities confiscating alcohol, it became logical to quickly drink all one had resulting in an upsurge in binge drinking.

Fear of communism drove the McCarthyism of the 1950s. Associates, friends and relatives reported on each other to the House Un-American Activities Committee, which made sure that suspected communists were publicly humiliated and lost their jobs and that those who refused to cooperate spent time in jail. The Satanic abuse and sexual abuse scares of the 1990s, aided by the dubious science of Repressed Memory Syndrome, resulted in lost jobs, broken families and many innocents in prison. These North American moral panics intended to change culture in some ways, but they did not require a *diminution of selves* and thus would not satisfy the definition of a mind-virus used here.

Discussion

Wokism meets the four criteria used for identifying a mind virus. Because those criteria include the diminution of the self, it should not be surprising that wokism is heavily deterministic. By controlling the outer world of the cultural environment, it seeks to control the inner world of thought. As classical behaviourists in psychotherapy discovered, behaviourism works. Psychologist Susan Blackmore (1999) described humans as “meme machines” with illusions of free will. But she is only partially correct. Ordinarily, we modern humans follow patterns that our parents, teachers, religious leaders or other significant others mandated. Or we perform some behaviours habitually. Nonetheless, we have the capacity to *re-program* ourselves by focusing our attention, examining evidence, selecting alternatives, predicting results, and changing our behaviours (Robertson, 2017a). This is hard work and time consuming. Wokism seeks to become our significant other, replacing the role of such people as parents, teachers and religious leaders in generating our behavioural programming, while limiting our capacity for self-programming. That a mishmash involving the partial application of often competing philosophies could accomplish this in a largely educated population invites discussion as to its origin.

We can speculate about how a group of old Stalinist academics, sufficiently traumatized by the collapse of the Soviet Union to ignore the postmodernist attack on Marxism as a grand meta-narrative, began experimenting with pieces of various philosophies. Shaped by the reactions of their students, these professors hit on a combination that, though not philosophically consistent, was highly emotive: implanting a feeling of superior knowledge and urgency in their charges along with built-in “attack memes” that prevented them from easily assimilating non-sanctioned

points of view. From the perspective of a mind-virus, people become vectors for the purpose of infecting new hosts (Bjarneskans, Gronnevik, & Sandberg, 1997). I doubt that many of the woke have actually read Jacques Derrida let alone Marx, Heidegger, Hegel or the other white males that grandfathered their worldview. Irrespective of its actual origins, this mind-virus has demonstrated a capacity to mutate that defies placement on the political spectrum.

A virus has no ideological loyalty. New mutations can rapidly overtake older ones. While initial varieties of wokism were anti-capitalist, the corporate media and transnational high tech companies (including some of the world's richest people) have adopted a new strain. Whereas the Left has traditionally challenged the concentration of corporate power, particularly with respect to corporations controlling news, the woke have embraced the rights of private companies to censor viewpoints. We have to consider, therefore, how wokism serves monopoly capitalism. Globalization has lowered the real wages of working class people and reduced the job prospects of anyone with a high school education or less in the United States and Canada. The jobs that these people once held have been largely outsourced to low-wage economies. If the working class is racially divided, which is guaranteed by identity politics, then it cannot be effectively organized by unions or political parties as a class. Wokism provides the capitalists who benefit most from globalization with opportunities to signal their own virtue while cementing in place the very system that created their huge profits in the first place.

Inoculation against a mind-virus is possible through self-education. We need to recognize the code words that woke people use and the contradictions that are inherent in their assertions. This virus normally begins by appealing to our social conscience. If we happen to be members of an identified minority, it appeals to our group loyalty. If that does not work, then the woke typically lash out, as I have shown. We need to recognize the pattern. I recommend a sense of humour to maintain perspective. I do not recommend apologies, because wokists see these as admissions of moral deficiency, and these "admissions" can be used to manipulate others. Instead, we should focus on the deficiencies in wokism and on objectively verifiable facts. Remember that the world has become a much better place in the last 50 years. Poverty, disease, infant mortality, racism, sexism and the murder rate have all declined worldwide. We need to celebrate these advances and protect science and reason that have made them possible. Pluckrose and Lindsay (2020a) said:

We do not believe that bad ideas can be defeated by being repressed, especially when they are as socially powerful as postmodern ideas are right now. Instead, they need to be engaged and defeated within the marketplace of ideas, so that they may die a natural death and be rightly recognized as defunct. (p. 264)

To defeat a mind-virus we must first re-assert the Enlightenment ideal that human beings, through the use of evidence-based processes, can indeed begin to discern objective reality and truth. I hope that I have contributed to this process with this paper.

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Appendix I: Footnotes

[1] Dr. Robertson is Lead Psychologist, Collaborative Centre for Justice and Safety at the University of Regina, Canada. He has published on the structure of the self, the use of prior learning assessment in self-construction, self-mapping in therapy, memetic mutations in religious transmission, and “residential school syndrome” as a form of post-traumatic stress disorder. His recent book *The Evolved Self: Mapping an Understanding of Who We Are* was published by the University of Ottawa Press.

[2] Individual Publication Date: February 22, 2021: <http://www.in-sightjournal.com/wokism>;
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[3] As used here, reflective thought is a kind of thinking involving situating one’s self in past events.

[4] In 2017, a founder of Black Lives Matter, Toronto was reported as posting on her Facebook page “Whiteness is not humxness, in fact, white skin is sub-humxn. All phenotypes exist within the black family and white ppl are a genetic defect of blackness” (Curl, 2017).

[5] This second group is Humanist Canada’s official Facebook page. Only Humanist Canada board members and designated employees could post to this page although all members can respond.

Retro-evolution in food and health care and its impact on modern culture

December 22, 2023

I engaged in food struggle sessions with my mother when I was eight. An earlier introduction to spinach would have likely produced a different result. Infants will eat most anything including worms and dirt, but young children quickly become conditioned to the taste and consistency of food given to them by their caregivers. It is possible to change one's diet later in life. Having read about its health benefits, I reconditioned myself to like spinach at age 30. Millions of North Americans have been using a similar process to reject "Western" foods and modern medicine while promoting preferred non-European alternatives. While much has been written about how 1960s radicalism eventually resulted in replacing workers with students as the revolutionary class in the Marxist paradigm (Coughlin & Higgins, 2019; Lindsay, 2020), there has been little examination of the vital contribution of the less overtly political "counterculture" side of the old Hippie movement. My thesis is that today's identity politics would have died stillborn had it not drawn from many sources in an evolutionary process. Notions that things European are bad while non-European ways are superior grew out of the New Age Movement which, in turn, is grounded in pre-Marxian Romanticism – the Noble Savage Myth of Chateaubriand and Rousseau. This has been used to promote questionable notions about food and medicine.

In 1969 Mohawk activist Kahn-Tineta Horn drew on this romanticization of the indigenous to tell an overflowing crowd of mostly white students, at the University of Saskatchewan's largest lecture theater, that they were guilty of genocide and the instrument of their genocide was milk. Milk was described as poisonous to people who are aboriginal to the Americas, and it has allegedly been fed to aboriginal children since first contact in an effort to reduce the population. Of course, if milk has such deleterious effects on the aboriginal population, it likely is not so healthy for the non-aboriginal population either. Other European-typical foods have increasingly become proscribed.

It was the second decade of the 21st century at an expensive restaurant overlooking Yokohama harbor. My wife ordered spaghetti, and almost as an afterthought added, "Of course, gluten free." She thought that a rice based culture would naturally have superior "rice spaghetti" but the waitress appeared to have difficulty understanding. Her supervisor, who had a better command of English and understood food intolerances, offered several traditional rice dishes. A cook was added to the discussion, and he explained that he could not make spaghetti out of rice. On leaving the restaurant my partner slapped her hands together triumphantly having educated the Japanese on the need for gluten-free spaghetti. She viewed herself to be part of a movement.

Whether or not one can make spaghetti out of rice, corn or quinoa flour depends on how one defines the term. While the traditional Italian dish is made from wheat, it has been re-defined in North America to reference long noodles that resemble the original. Similarly, "oatmeal" is being redefined. One can now buy "superfood oatmeal" containing chia, buckwheat and hemp but no oats. Why not call it "chia and buckwheat cereal with hemp?" Such honesty in advertising would be counterproductive if the objective is to replace whole food categories with alternates while making people forget about the original. Marketers of oatmeal have fought back by selling "gluten free" oatmeal, but the product is glutenless in its natural state. In addition to increasing the price for the product, the "gluten free" label perpetuates the notion that there is something unhealthy about gluten for most people.

People from modern Euro-American cultures have shown a unique historic willingness to question their own cultural assumptions including those related to diet but this openness is not shared by everyone. I have debated Muslims have insisted that their proscription against eating pork is not primarily religious but is based on the “fact” that the food contains unhealthy bacteria and worms. They would be doing everyone a favor by banning pork for everyone. The willingness to question our diets have led to some strange fads. For example, butter was abandoned in favour of margarine by people concerned about high cholesterol levels. When the original research supporting this change was debunked, people flocked back to butter with the assumption that there is something artificial and unhealthy about eating margarine. Now “plant butter” is on the market but it is not clear how this new product differs from margarine.

If we do not eat a food for an extended period of time our bodies will often react with the feeling of disagreeableness should it be re-introduced thus creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. With some foods such as milk, we may even lose the enzymes needed for digestion. It begins with an accepted authority suggesting the elimination of wheat, milk, seafood or some other suspect food group to combat symptoms such as headaches, sleeplessness, drowsiness, or lack of energy. The patient will subsequently either feel better or not. If the patient feels better he or she will likely attribute this positive result to the change in diet. If the patient does not feel better then the practitioner suggests removing different foods from a proscribed list. When new symptoms occur, or old ones reoccur, the impulse is to stop eating yet another food. My wife is now intolerant to wheat, oats, milk, shell fish, peanuts, tomatoes (except in pizza sauce), oranges, pork, mushrooms, watermelon and wines from California. She has never been diagnosed with a food allergy. Advertisers appeal to the food-phobic by stating what their product is not rather than what it is. For example, people will often purchase gluten and lactose free products without knowing what is being used as a substitute. Sometimes nothing is used as a substitute. For example, what is marketed as “lactose free yogurt” has all the original lactose but the enzymes needed to digest it have been added. Whether marketing foods as lactose free that have always been without lactose, like goat cheese, or subtly adding the digestive enzymes, the marketing reinforces the narrative that there is something wrong with basically nutritious foods and that the alternative is more expensive “health food.” This bias is replicated with respect to medicine.

The term “alternate medicine” generates the notion that there are ways outside of scientific medicine to treat illness with equal efficacy. The name “naturopathy,” implies that modern medicine is unnatural. But modern medicine is constituted by proven treatments that are often based on older folk medicines. For example, chewing the bark of the white willow is an effective pain reliever used as a folk remedy by several cultures aboriginal to the Americas. Aspirin is a copy of white willow. Both are proven therapies for pain relief and blood clotting, but neither have been shown to cure cancer. Failure to understand the distinction between proven and unproven therapies can lead to death. For example in 2012 Ezekiel Stephan, a 19 month old infant, died of meningitis. His parents had been advised to take the boy to a hospital but they chose to instead treat him with “natural remedies” such as garlic, horseradish and apple cider. In 2015 eleven year old Makayla Sault stopped taking chemotherapy for leukemia and she was taken to the [Hippocrates Institute](#) in Florida, an institute that uses supplements, massages and raw food consisting largely of sprouts and wheatgrass. While chemotherapy has a 75% success rate in treating the type of cancer she had, no studies have shown any degree of success for the treatments given at this institute. The notion that modern medicine is harmful, ineffective or unnatural is grounded in homeopathy.

In 1774 England, Benjamin Jesty successfully tested his hypothesis that infection with cowpox could offer protection against smallpox. In 1796 German physician [Samuel Hahnemann](#) concluded that a substance that causes symptoms of a disease in healthy people can cure similar symptoms in sick people. His homeopathic remedies were made by diluting a symptom producing substance repeatedly until the final product was chemically indistinguishable from the diluent. Between each dilution practitioners called homeopaths may hit and/or shake the product to help the diluent, such as water, “remember” the original substance. Homeopaths attempt to match such dilutions to the patient to promote the body’s ‘vital force’ and stimulate healing. Although homeopathic remedies have been found to be [biochemically](#) inert (Ernst, 2002; Linde et al., 1997; Shang et al., 2005) they have become central to the anti-western medicine movement.

According to their national website, naturopaths use homeopathy and traditional Chinese medicine in the service of regulating the individual’s “vital force.” To the extent that naturopaths advocate the proven use of herbal medicines, or lifestyle choices like regular exercise, sunlight, fresh air and bathing to build general health, they reinforce modern medicine. Unfortunately, naturopathy has also embraced the pseudoscientific. Dr. Harriett Hall pithily stated, “Naturopathy doesn’t make sense. The things naturopaths do that are good are not special, and the things they do that are special are not good” (Hall, 2010, p. 5). After graduating from the Bastyr University with a doctorate in naturopathic medicine Britt Hermes explained:

Naturopaths are not trained similar to physicians, nurse practitioners, or physician assistants.... Naturopaths are trained in a hodgepodge of antiquated methods, mystical theories, and bare-bone fundamentals of medicine. (Senapathy, 2016, para. 6)

Naturopathic students are required to master homeopathy, energy modalities, herbalism, and chiropractic-like manipulations There is a strong emphasis on anti-vaccine promotion and alternative cancer treatments. Naturopaths also claim affinity to traditional Chinese medicine defining the concept of “chi” to be the “vital energy” hypothesized by Hahnemann. In 2012, I answered an advertisement for a one hour acupuncture treatment by a doctor of Chinese and Korean medicine. The \$30.00 charge seemed a reasonable price to satisfy my curiosity. I was admitted into a consulting room where Dr. Li had me clasp a galvanic response machine that was connected to a computer. With a show of deep concern Dr. Li diagnosed me as having liver, kidney, and bowel disease. This surprised me because I had a full physical examination three months previously and had not been diagnosed with any of these conditions. We proceeded to another room where I disrobed and had acupuncture needles inserted in various points on my chest, arms, and legs. He gave each needle a twist before leaving the room. On his return, about twenty minutes later, I asked what specifically this treatment was for thinking it would have had something to do with his diagnoses. He appeared surprised by my question and said, “Oh, it’s just your general health.” After dressing, I returned to his outer office where the receptionist was packaging a series of medicinal herbal teas. These expensive teas had not been mentioned previously. When I objected, the doctor’s assistant turned to my wife and said “he’s afraid.” My wife, with a look of loving concern, encouraged me to purchase the teas for my health. I agreed providing I was given the names of each potion. Following the homeopathic tradition Dr. Li wrote out their Latin names, and subsequent analysis revealed that 11 of the potions were relaxants and one was an aphrodisiac. None had any obvious relationship with liver, kidney, or bowel disease, and I have not suffered any of these conditions since.

Before we label Dr. Li as a scammer, we need to consider a cross-cultural explanation. Modern medicine diagnoses and treats conditions. Pre-modern treatments often identified evil spirits or a lack of life balance as the cause of ill health. According to his traditional culture, North Americans do not live in balance and this results in health problems. Dr. Li assumed that people not practising his culture would have these conditions, but it is necessary to convince us to change our ways before the conditions become untreatable.

About 10 years after my experience with the Chinese/Korean doctor, my wife and her sister suggested that I see a “great new” acupuncturist in Regina. I demurred on the grounds that I do not wish to seek medical treatment unless I have a condition I want treated. My sister-in-law turned to my wife and said “he’s afraid.” The belief system had created a stock answer to explain acupuncture “hesitancy.”

A more recent stock answer is to accuse doubters of racism. Since the Enlightenment that brought science and reason to the fore began in Europe, inviting others to share the methods of the Enlightenment is portrayed as assimilationist. Publisher Scott Douglas Jacobsen was accordingly accused of racism and arrogance by the President of the British Columbia Naturopathic Association after he wrote an article (Jacobsen, 2020) challenging the assumptions of naturopathy. Jacobsen turned the tables stating:

I find the charge backwards, blind, and, indeed, “racist and... arrogant” of you. Where you’re coming out as among the worst type of arrogant racists, someone who presents themselves as anti-racist by claiming others are racist with an assumption of moral superiority by asserting another as “culturally arrogant,” but, in fact, someone assuming that only individuals capable of or acting in... certain cultural practices have been one ‘race’ or ethnicity are indeed being racist. (Jacobsen, personal communication, February 2021)

Ericka Li (2023) proposed a tripartite distinction of “Premodern,” “Modern,” and “Postmodern” in describing medical practices. She described modern medicine as, “a product of the Enlightenment, prioritizing reason, science, and individual sovereignty [transcending] geographical boundaries and ethnic divides,” (Li, 2023 Stop calling my profession ‘Western Medicine,’ para. 4). She illustrated how postmodern medicine seeks to dismantle modern medicine’s underlying philosophy using the example of postmodern gender dysphoria:

There is no objective data obtainable through testing that can disconfirm the transgender diagnosis. Regardless of a teenager’s biological sex, history of family dysfunction or sexual trauma, age of onset of transgender identity, potential social contagion, or autism, the prescribed treatment remains the same—puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones. (Li, 2023 Queering medical science, para. 5)

Dr. E. Li noted that postmodern medicine has no means of identifying those who would benefit from medical transition to the exclusion of those who wouldn’t. While a practitioner of modern medicine would consider the severe risks of treatment aware that even the existence of a single detransitioner would sound alarm bells, postmodern practitioners are concerned only about current identification. While modern medicine seeks to collaborate with parents and guardians in maintaining family cohesion, the postmodern practitioner regards parents as a threat. She noted that for modern medicine it is unthinkable to pit a divorced mother and father against each other, using the parent more willing to transition their child as leverage against the hesitant one. She said postmodern doctors play “word games” to protect themselves from charges of misdiagnosis:

During the 2023 gender symposium co-sponsored by Seattle Children's Hospital, I was informed that I must not use the word "detransitioner" because it is "harmful to the community." Instead, I was instructed to say "people who changed their gender goals." (Li, 2023 Queering medical ethics, para. 3)

According to E. Li, concerns about morbidity, mortality, providing false hope, and patient abandonment vanish in postmodernism and are replaced with a concern that Trans People as a class gain collective power. The result is that there can be "no meaningful distinction between trans identities that began in toddlerhood or adolescence, those resulting from social contagion or autism, or between real and factitious cases" (Li, 2023 Blurring boundaries para. 1)

As can be seen, Transgenderism and Queer Theory did not evolve from modern medicine but from New Age philosophies that, in turn, attempted to preserve the pre-eminence of folk remedies. What is taken as "postmodern medicine" is the latest attempt to preserve and reify unproven treatments in part, by changing the meaning of words. "Treatment" no longer means something done to combat a specific illnesses but something done to "treat" the general condition of being "Western." Alternative foods are given the name of foods they are meant to replace. More recently, a woman is no longer defined by her sex but by her decision to identify as one with the result that there can be no woman-specific health conditions. "Breast feeding" is changed to "chest feeding" and "mother" becomes "birthing person." The transgenderism of which E. Li speaks, and the "health food" and "alternative medicine" turns are part of a larger movement that seeks to "deconstruct" modern civilization. "Racism" no longer means an ideology to justify the discrimination of groups of people but the advocacy of merit and ability in academic or career choice. "Systemic racism" no longer means identifiable mechanisms that discriminate against groups or classes of people but the assumption of such discrimination as applied to non-white peoples. If this new movement were truly postmodern, then this belief could be deconstructed but any such attempt is met with the charge of racism. Thus, we can see that this movement uses the methods of postmodernism but holds itself to be immune from deconstruction. In this it mimics the fascism of Martin Heidegger (1962) who held that science and reason are subject to the superior and true knowledge of a Dasein or Fuhrer. The cancelation and ultimate suicide of Richard Bilkzsto (Robertson, 2023) offers an object lesson.

Drawing on his experience as a school principal in both countries, Bilkzsto disputed a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) trainer's unsupported assertion that Canada was more racist than the United States. DEI provides mandatory training to employees in the new ideology which has variously been called "political correctness" (Mueller, 2004), "cancel culture" (Wright, 2023; Young, 2021), "gender ideology" (Frederick & Balswick, 2011; Miller, 2018), "critical social justice" (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020), "Cultural Marxism" (Coughlin & Higgins, 2019; Lindsay, 2020) and "Woke Identitarianism" (Robertson, 2023). The DEI trainer did not offer any argument in support of her assertion, but said the job of white people is to believe and failure to do so is to support "white supremacy." She continued to use Bilkzsto as an example of white supremacy in a subsequent session he was forced to attend. He was then told he would not be receiving any further contracts of employment. Other professionals have also been harshly cancelled with a predictable silencing effect (Applebaum, 2021; Bloch, 2023; Kriegman, 2022; Wright, 2022).

This new movement substitutes Marx's "working class" with oppressed "races" such as blacks and Muslims. Like pre-WWII fascists, it has formed alliances with multinational corporations (Samuels, 2022) and it engages in identity politics racializing certain groups. It has borrowed the

New Age Movement's antipathy for all things western coupled with a romanticization of non-European cultures. For example, New Agers embraced a form of Aboriginal Spirituality with some becoming pipe carriers. One New Ager, Charles Storm, inventing the modern medicine wheel with quadrants representing the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual (Robertson, 2014). This movement operates as a quasi-religion built on the myths of the blank slate, ghost in the machine and the noble savage (Pinker, 2003).

This article has traced the contribution of New Age foodism and "alternate" medicine to a political movement that devalues science, reason and all things "Western." It is unlikely that anyone consciously combined the disparate pieces of antagonistic philosophies into a new proto-religion that was then marketed. I have argued that this Wokism is likely a product of cultural evolution whereby random units of culture that Richard Dawkins (1976, 1982) called memes combined with other units that could then be copied from brain to brain forming a kind of mind virus (Robertson, 2021). In this article I have argued that New Ageism has played an understudied role in its incubation.

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Is Humanism Compatible with Indigeneity?

May 1, 2023

Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson, President

New Enlightenment Project: A Canadian Humanist Initiative

In this article I argue that humanism is perfectly compatible with aboriginality; however, its compatibility with “indigeneity” will depend on the meaning assigned to the word. Connotative meaning not only impacts on the immediate message, it can influence the trajectory of thought, making definition necessary at the beginning of meaningful discourse. The term, “humanism,” involves the belief that science, reason and compassion can lead to material and spiritual progress. As defined by the late Carl Sagan (1996) the word “spiritual” exists within the realm of science conveying our ability to “grasp the intricacy, beauty and subtlety of life” that includes a “sense of elation and humility combined” (p. 29).

This humanist belief system flows from the Enlightenment that began in 17th Century Europe. In *The Evolved Self* (Robertson, 2020), I suggest this Enlightenment honoured the individualism that was already inherent in having a self that was capable of taking oneself as an object in remembered past events and imagined future ones. I argued that this skill had been in existence for at least 3 millennia and that organized religions evolved to put constraints or limitations on the self in the interest of preserving collectivist societies. The question posited in the title to this article then becomes, “Is the humanist rejection of supernatural explanations in favour of scientific and rational understandings compatible with cultures aboriginal or indigenous to the Americas?”

The connotative power of words was impressed on me in 1982 when I chaired a committee reporting to the Regina Public School Board on the education provided aboriginal students. Naming our committee proved to be more controversial than our examination of textbooks or teacher training. The descendants of those who signed treaties with the Canadian government insisted the word “Indian” be in our name arguing, “It was Indians who signed the treaties, and we should honour to treaties and be known as Indians.” Emphasizing our commonality, the Metis, who were recognized as an aboriginal people in Canada’s constitution that year, argued that the more inclusive word “native” should be used. This resulted in the somewhat confusing name: “The Indian and Native Committee on Education for the Regina Public School Board.”

The term “aboriginal,” means “original inhabitants” and its use is controversial when used to describe descendants of multiple migrations. For example, are the descendants of the Clovis peoples who settled most of the American supercontinent more aboriginal than the Dene who appeared around 15,000 years later? Can we call the Inuit, whose ancestry can be traced to the Siberian Birnirk people and who replaced the now extinct Paleo-Eskimo people in the Arctic about 1,000 years ago aboriginal while denying the term to the Norse who were simultaneously migrating from the other direction (Raff et al., 2015; Raghavan et al., 2014)? In accordance with modern usage, this article refers to all peoples who inhabited the Americas before the 16th Century European migration by the adjective “aboriginal” or by the proper nouns Amerindian, Inuit, and Metis.

Those who originally peopled the Americas were explorers and adventurers. They established empires in Central and South America, but in North America sovereign clan-based bands of 100

to 1000 people were the norm. They were not particularly adept conservationists and during their watch woolly mammoths, giant mastodons, ground sloths, glyptodonts, bear-sized beavers, saber-toothed tigers, American lions, cheetahs, camels, and horses all went extinct (Shermer, 2004). Like humans everywhere else on the planet, Amerindians and later the Inuit and Metis made war. War was the cause of death of 30 to 35 percent of the aboriginal populations in northern British Columbia from 1,500 BCE to 500 CE (Shermer, 2004). While women and children were often taken as captives following war, there is documentation of entire populations being murdered (Denig, 1856/1961; Widdowson & Howard, 2008).

Humanists often trace religious precepts to notions of supernatural agency developed by pre-historic hunters and gatherers. Equating the animism practised by aboriginal peoples with the religious dogmatism that served to constrain science is an over-reach. Animism, of course, flowed from our evolved ability to attribute motives to others. In filling a very human need to answer the question “why” the agency we attribute to other humans was often attributed to lakes, mountains, weather systems and other species by Neolithic peoples. It would be logically consistent to assert that these animate forces would have wants and needs that could be appeased by human intervention. “If everyone “knows” that a person needs to make a sacrifice to the sentient spirit of a lake to ensure a safe journey across, then one makes the sacrifice” (Robertson, 2014, p. 31). Such beliefs are not religiously held if held tentatively subject to new evidence. In this example, such new evidence could be provided by the repeated successful crossings of people who did not make the prescribed sacrifice. Traditional aboriginal beliefs were more pragmatic than religious.

While I was on the staff of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College during the 1980s, a Dakota Sioux elder used to say “Dem Crees, we taught them everything they know.” Historically, he had a point. During the 18th century the Cree, armed with Hudson Bay rifles, drove the Sioux out of the northern Great Plains; but they adopted many of the cultural practices of the Sioux such as powwows, sun dances, horse dances and the heyoka. They did not convert to the religion of the Sioux in a religious sense, but they chose practices that had worked for the peoples already present. George Catlin, a U.S. American artist who married a Plains Cree woman at the beginning of the 18th century and joined her band described these pragmatists as a nation of atheists. Edwin Denig, who married an Assiniboine woman at the beginning of the 19th century and joined her band was surprised that they had no belief in a creator god and that they asserted that life began when the sun’s rays impregnated the ground (Denig, 1856/1961). This understanding can be used to teach the theory of evolution since life began in earth’s primordial shallow seas warmed by the sun’s rays and continues to be plant based to this day. So where did the idea begin that there is a Creator-God to whom we could pray?

There are creators in some aboriginal mythologies. Saulteaux elders have shared that while their Anishinaabe tradition included a great spirit that spirit was not a creator. Creation of plants and animals was left to four lesser spirits who acted in the spirit of the great one, and they suggested it would be disrespectful to pray to the Great Spirit. In 1871 Wanapum tribal leader and shaman, Smohalla, declared:

It is good for man and woman to be together on the earth.... We do not know how the earth was made, nor do we say who made it. The earth was peopled, and their hearts are good, and my mind is that it is as it ought to be. The world was peopled by whites and Indians, and they should all grow as one flesh. (Bell, 2011)

Smohalla's words suggest humility and mental flexibility – necessary qualities for the development of knowledge. I have suggested that the traditional stone medicine wheels that dot the Great Plains demonstrate a similar flexibility (Robertson, 2021). The circle can be taken to represent holism, but the contents vary. Few of the estimated 343 wheels were divided into four. One in southern Alberta has 26 spokes. Many have no spokes at all with some featuring parallel lines and others featuring petro forms both inside and outside the circle. The number of variations suggests flexibility in thought and representation. Such flexibility allows for new evidence-based approaches to life's challenges. Medicine wheels can be constructed to represent the intersection of two or more variables. They can also be used to illustrate a variety of concepts not necessarily based on the number four which in itself has no magical power.

Secular humanism is a philosophical and ethical stance that emphasizes the value and agency of human beings, with an emphasis on critical thinking and evidence. It is relevant to aboriginal peoples in several ways: 1) A humanist perspective emphasizes individual agency leading to people taking control of their own lives, communities, and cultural heritage; 2) Humanism values diversity and respect for different cultures, beliefs, and lifestyles; and 3) Evidence-based decision-making as embraced by humanism can be seen as important for aboriginal communities in making decisions about their future and addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. Respect for all cultures involves accepting that people can benefit from the knowledge science and reason creates, and they can enrich their cultures accordingly. While it would be tempting to declare, "Yes, humanism and aboriginality are compatible with each other," such a position ignores a significant challenge mounted by people who call this approach "assimilation."

During the first decade of this century, I presented at six annual conferences of the Native Mental Health Association of Canada on such topics as the use of prior learning and assessment in building the aboriginal self, the self in family and community, residential school syndrome, attention deficit disorder, youth suicide, and building community. Other presenters focused on "The Medicine Wheel" which they assumed was a circle with four basic quadrants: mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical. These presenters often attacked the "Bering Strait Theory" that holds that humans, perhaps as early as 20,000 years ago migrated to the Americas from Asia. As with Christian literalists who attack the theory of evolution, these presenters defined the word "theory" to be a guess. They declared that there is a thing called "western science" that holds the individual to be completely separate from the object of investigation; and they asserted that these "scientists" believe they are infallible, exact and accurate, unbiased, objective and impartial. Humanists will recognize the strawman created here as the actual opposite of science which holds that human beings are subjective, and we need to find means to reduce our subjectivity to advance knowledge.

At mid-decade, Bill Mussel, president of the Native Mental Health Association of Canada, began talking circle discussions with presenters and members of the association as to whether the preferred term to be used with Amerindian, Inuit and Metis peoples should be "aboriginal" or "indigenous." Mussel said he liked both terms but preferred "indigenous" because it implies a people who are rooted in the land. From the Latin *indigena*, the word refers to a plant or animal that lives, grows, originates or is naturally occurring to a particular area. Those who asserted that there is such a thing as "western science" contrasted it with "indigenous knowledge" which was rooted in North America. The implications of this particular word usage were demonstrated at an Ontario university while these discussions were being held.

In 2005 philosopher Chris DiCarlo suggested to a graduate class at Wilfrid Laurier University that given our common human origins in East Africa any racist philosophy is untenable. When a student complained that DiCarlo was being “insensitive” to the aboriginal teaching that a creator placed aboriginal people to the American continents, he suggested a class debate on the subject. The debate did not happen, and he was made to appear before a disciplinary committee for being disrespectful of this “indigenous knowledge” (DiCarlo, 2005; Kaill, 2005). His teaching contract was not renewed. Conversely, many aboriginal elders end their prayers with the phrase “All my relations.” This phrase denotes the unity of all living things and can be taken to support the theory of evolution and the united ancestry of the human race.

In discussing the DiCarlo example, Cree/Metis elder and historian, **Keith Goulet**, said there is a spectrum of views associated with aboriginal or indigenous spirituality similar to the spectrum that exists within the sects of Christianity. I have previously referred to the more “fundamentalist” indigenous spirituality on this spectrum as Native Spirituality (Robertson, 2014) in describing how it was used to discipline an elder support worker in a northern Cree community.

While the Plains Cree of the 19th Century adopted many of the practises of Siouxian culture, the Cree who remained in the boreal forest did not. In the 1990s I assisted one such community battling the problem of youth suicide (Robertson, 2015). With the assistance of community elders, we were successful. This community had voluntarily become Anglican in the mid-19th Century, and the elders identified as Anglican. For the band’s health department, located some 80 kilometres away, this was “problematic.” The department conducted workshops and sponsored cultural gatherings promoting “Native Spirituality,” but the elders appeared unmoved. They recognized that historically their people had not always been Christian, but they said many of the practices promoted by the “traditionalists,” including powwows and sun dances, had never been part of the Woodland Cree culture, and the efforts to convert them to this new Native Spirituality were felt to be oppressive. The local elder support worker was threatened with disciplinary action for failing to promote Native Spirituality with sufficient vigor, and this led to legal action.

The band health staff did not view their efforts to be one of oppression but one of healing.

Brave Heart (2003), a Lakota Sioux, popularized the notion that all Amerindian peoples suffer from historic trauma irrespective of their actual history. This trauma is “awakened” using audiovisual materials and role play, so that a “cathartic working-through necessary for healing” (p. 11) can commence using prayer, smudging, pipe ceremonies, sweat lodge ceremonies and medicine wheel teachings. One participant in a workshop on Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition that was sponsored by the local community college did not perceive this approach as healing stating:

Our provincial Department of Higher Education and Manpower has no more business teaching Native Spirituality—with the intent of conversion—than it has teaching Tibetan Buddhism.... Imagine what towering indignation would have been engendered had (the PLAR instructor) been a Catholic and she had asked us to burn incense, to partake in Holy Sacraments, to confess our sins, and tied problem-solving to the four points of the Cross. (Robertson, 2011, pp. 99-100)

In the mind of this participant smudging, the burning of sweet grass often used in a cleansing ceremony, was like the burning of incense in the Catholic tradition. The pipe ceremony was thought of as like holy sacraments. The presumption that all participants suffer from trauma from

which they need to publically confess was felt to be like the concept of original sin. The use of the four-part reified medicine wheel seemed to have a similar function to the Catholic cross. The parallels between Christianity and Native Spirituality are not accidental.

Earlier in this article I quoted Smohalla as saying in 1871 that he did not know who created Earth, but that it was good that all races work together. By 1875 he was a changed prophet. He had climbed a mountain in what is now Washington State and received a new vision that led him to predict a day of redemption when people of European descent would be removed from the American continents leaving indigenous people to resume their pre-ordained way of life. At that time the spirits of the deceased who were true to their aboriginal ways would return to their bodies in a great resurrection. Smohalla, who was the first recorded aboriginal leader to use the concept of Mother Earth (Gill, 1991), told his followers to not farm as that was like taking a knife to her bosom. They were also to not participate in mining as that was chipping away at her bones. He was not the first aboriginal prophet to preach a messianic religion.

Wovoka became a 19th century Paiute shaman after being adopted and raised by Christian missionaries. He taught that by living piously and by performing a type of round dance called “the ghost dance” the Europeans would disappear from the Americas, the buffalo would return, and the way of life of people aboriginal to North America would be restored. Wovoka performed levitation and bullet stopping tricks to convince onlookers of the power of his magic. As the new religion spread northward his Lakota Sioux disciples came to believe the ghost shirts worn by dancers would stop the bullets of the white men (Robertson, 2014). The dream of Smohalla and Wovoka to rid North America of Europeans did not materialize, but many of the teachings were codified and exported to other aboriginal peoples where they continued to evolve protected by a smoldering sense of entitlement.

The modern medicine wheel, often known as “The Medicine Wheel,” is divided into quadrants representing physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual selves. The four quadrants are said to be symbolically representative of the “four” races of the earth: red and yellow; black and white, but many readers will recognize that the order and colours of these so-called races come from a Christian children’s song “Jesus Loves the Little Children.” It is said that this medicine wheel divides the stages of life into four: childhood, adolescence, adult, and old age; but adolescence was unknown to Neolithic societies having been invented by European civilization with the advent of the industrial revolution. This medicine wheel is said to count the four seasons failing to note that the Woodland Cree had six. Widdowson and Howard (2013) questioned whether the concept itself could be used to advance critical thinking, the dissemination of abstract ideas, or the organization of complex information into constituent parts:

While it appears that the Medicine Wheel . . . offers a more systematic pedagogical technique (as compared to concrete conceptualizations in hunter-gatherer societies), this turns out to be a mirage. The “constituent parts” that emerge from the “breaking down of complex situations” are arbitrarily constructed, the only basis for which is a spiritual belief about the significance of the number four. (p. 294)

The Medicine Wheel critiqued by Widdowson and Howard had non-aboriginal origins. The word “mental” has no direct translation in any Algonquian language native to Canada. For example, the Cree word/phrase Kiskwew (literally, “s/he is crazy”) is used to represent the term in northern Saskatchewan to the angst of practicing mental health workers. It can be inferred that whoever first added the word mental to the Medicine Wheel was thinking in a European

language, and we need to consider the possibility that it was influenced by the New Age Movement that in the mid-20th century embraced and promoted a Native Spirituality with non-aboriginal pipe carriers. While Native Spirituality is situated on the spectrum of aboriginal spiritualities referenced by Elder Goulet, more traditional spiritualities described here were local to the band, tribe, or nation. In contrast, Native Spirituality can be considered to be linked to pan-Indianism where indigeneity is viewed to be universal.

My daughter and I attended a powwow on the Kahnawake reserve near Montreal in 2002, and we recognized all but one of the drum songs and dances as being from the northern plains. We attended a family reunion on the Ashcroft reserve in western British Columbia. The drum songs at the honor feast were again plains culture except for one traditional hand drum number. The export of plains culture goes beyond songs and dances. In his study of two bands in Nova Scotia, Poliandri (2011) noted that what is understood as Mi'kmaq spirituality as practiced by traditionalists often involves the beliefs and ceremonies of the Sioux and Blackfoot. While the older spiritualities may be practiced in local communities, the pan-Indian Native Spirituality is recognized by universities and the general public. I have often had students tell me they learned to be aboriginal by attending university. I want to tell them that it is likely their home communities never had aspects of culture taught at university, and in any case their traditional beliefs and practices were not held religiously, that is for all time and place.

At the beginning of the millennium Steven Pinker (2003) noted that a proto-religious movement had coalesced around three myths: the blank slate, the ghost in the machine, and the noble savage. The blank slate is the notion that we are created by culture and thus are infinitely malleable dependent on cultural change with a particular emphasis on how words are used. The ghost in the machine myth supposes some essence prior to birth that, for example, might determine that doctors made a mistake in naming an infant with a penis a boy. The noble savage myth supposes that pre-colonization civilizations and indigenous knowledge were inherently superior but that this “better world” was destroyed during the process of colonization. Humanists will recognize the parallels with fundamentalist Christianity in 1) being “born again” as a new person, 2) having an essence or soul that defines a true self, and 3) needing salvation from original sin. This new religious movement that includes but transcends Native Spirituality is, as yet, without an official name but is often referred to as “Wokism.”

In 1493 a Papal Bull proclaimed that America was unoccupied and that any aboriginal people found had no right of ownership and could be taken as slaves. Although this original “Doctrine of Discovery” was, in effect, modified by subsequent Papal Bulls, humanism was founded on the idea that no religious order should be able to make such pronouncements and that humans are self-determined knowledge producers in their own right. This is compatible with the traditional aboriginal stance of being humble in one’s beliefs that are dependent on evidence and context. While humanism is compatible with more traditional aboriginalities, it would find those who proclaim superior moral authority based on authority “rooted” in the land to be “problematic.”

In summation, the Enlightenment is a technology that allows for knowledge creation and should thus be available to all cultures ensuring their progressive advancement by the people who constitute those cultures. Humanism is an ethical and moral stance that grew out of the European Enlightenment that recognizes the worth and value of all people. Traditional aboriginal cultures practiced animism, and while supernatural beliefs are incompatible with humanism such beliefs were not traditionally religiously held thus allowing for an indigenization of the tools of the Enlightenment. A new religious movement is evolving that romanticizes a fundamentalistic form

of indigeniety, and this has the effect of keeping the tools of the Enlightenment from people's aboriginal to the Americas.

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