

COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY: FROM INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Summary

Although counseling psychology is a broad-based and inclusive branch of psychology, certain themes still tend to define counseling psychology across countries where it has had some time to develop and is more formally organized. Three of these themes—the world of work, the counseling process, and human diversity—will be highlighted as examples of contributions the branch has made to the discipline and that serve as potential springboards for work in the domain of human and global sustainability.

1. Psychology and Sustainable Development

The discipline of psychology has just begun to address the complex issues of sustainable global development. This shift has occurred, in part, because of an emerging collective awareness by some psychologists and organizational components of psychology of the profound interaction of global environmental and human behavioral issues that now affect all countries. The near exponential development of information exchange capabilities has also fostered increased capacity for communication and cooperation within the discipline as well as between disciplines and countries. However, such global thinking is still relatively new and contributions from psychology have not yet matured to the levels the discipline is capable of offering. More environmentally oriented psychologists argue that more traditionally oriented psychologists have yet to appreciate the expertise that psychology could bring to bear on the myriad of human behavioral issues that affect global sustainability.

There are hopeful signs within the discipline. Beyond the literature currently written by environmental psychologists, more articles about psychology promoting a sustainable future for humanity are appearing in broad-based and major psychology journals. Such contributions are now being flagged more as public policy contributions than as strictly “research projects”—as indeed they must—since such work will eventually inform and help drive regional, national, and international policies conducive to sustainable development.

Counseling psychology as one branch of the tree of psychology is itself only giving the most rudimentary thoughts to these concepts at present. However, the evolutionary background of counseling psychology is in many ways ideally suited to addressing human behavioral issues surrounding sustainable development. The branch’s value system focuses on human strengths and human developmental tasks, endorsing human diversity, and bringing an empirically trained eye to human problems in living. As such, a review of definitions and the development of counseling psychology’s collective knowledge base, current research, education/training, and practice foci in selected countries is helpful in contextualizing this branch’s potential for contribution to issues such as the Encyclopedia is intended to address.

2. Definitions of Counseling Psychology

Psychology is a relatively young discipline approximately 150 years of age, with organized counseling psychology, depending on country or origin, an even younger 50-year-old to yet-unborn sibling of the family. Even this relatively brief existence, however, has led to a number of self definitions of counseling psychology in various countries that reflect the particular stage of development of this branch at a given time

and place on the globe. In the U.S. where counseling psychology has developed in a relatively sustained and well-nurtured (albeit mixed) academic, training, and professional environment, self definitions of the branch are now broadly inclusive in terms of their scope of activities and undertakings. Although occasionally plagued by both internal and external professional identity issues due to its diverse historical roots, coupled with rapid and broad-based development, U.S. counseling psychology now defines itself as a “specialty area” deriving its history from both education and psychology. U.S. counseling psychology deals with a broad range of human functioning, identifies strongly with research, education/training, and practice synergies, and generally promotes human strengths, human diversity, and multicultural perspectives on human problems and solutions. Although counseling psychology is organizationally younger in countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom (U.K.), and Australia, analogous branch definitions have been developed that reflect similar value systems and research, training, and practice foci.

In general, where counseling psychology and counseling psychologists exist around the globe, they are seen as practitioners, educators, and researchers. They address both remedial and preventive approaches to human problems, use research data and theory to inform practice and vice versa, value diversity in the human condition, and are likely to focus on the individual in relation to their numerous social and cultural environments.

3. Education, Training, Standards, and Organizational Structures for Counseling Psychology

Most countries who formally educate and train counseling psychologists require at least a master’s level graduate degree from a psychology-related faculty and a designated period of supervised training and experiential activities before graduation. Some countries such as Canada and the U.S. have education and training requirements that accommodate either master’s and/or doctoral level degrees in counseling psychology. However, they focus their national psychology program accreditation activities at the doctoral level through such organizations as the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) or American Psychological Association (APA) to reflect education and training requirements that are longer, broader in scope, and more standardized. Finally, where formally organized and developed as a profession, counseling psychologists are either expected or legally compelled to abide by codes of ethics, professional standards, and legal requirements specific to the discipline and country in which they reside.

Even in North America, where more than 60 psychology licensing boards and organizations such as the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards and the Canadian Provincial Associations of Psychology have generally worked within a generic licensure or certification approach for its practitioners, the term “psychologist” and scope of practice of such registered psychologists are still not generally fixed to a given branch area of professional or health service psychology. Instead, counseling psychologist practitioners in Canada and the U.S. are often self-monitoring with regard to their individual scope of practice and are usually enjoined by their codes of ethics, their formal organizational bodies, and licensing boards requirements to practice within their areas of competence dictated by their education, training, and professional experience.

In the U.K. the regulatory root is somewhat different in that an organization involving counseling and counseling psychology was formed in 1982, initially as a Special Group of the British Psychological Society (BPS), and was later redesignated as the Division of Counselling Psychology (DCoP). The major imperatives of DCoP included furthering the development of counseling psychology, both as a body of knowledge and skills and as a profession, and the maintenance of a Register of Chartered Psychologists. Accredited members of the division must possess the Diploma in Counselling Psychology or its equivalent and undertake annual professional development to maintain competence in the field.

In Australia, similar variations in regulatory requirements exist. The College of Counselling Psychologists of the Australian Psychological Society (APS) was formed in 1977. The mission of the college is to promote the professionalism of the profession and ensure adequate levels of competency of both counseling psychologists and training programs. The college requires that counseling psychologists possess a master's in counseling psychology and attend workshops and seminars to maintain current knowledge.

As counseling psychology is an evolving and expanding branch of psychology, counseling psychologists may choose to highlight their current or newly acquired expertise through additional professional national credentialing bodies. In the U.S. and Canada, for example, counseling psychologist practitioners who meet independent practice level licensure/charter/certification requirements by their state or provincial regulatory boards may voluntarily pursue additional credentialing as health service providers in psychology. By submitting their education, training, and professional experience dossiers to such national credentialing bodies such as the (U.S.) National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology (NR) or the Canadian Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology (CRHSPP), counseling psychologists who meet the criteria and have demonstrated continued ethical practice may then be listed with the designation "health service provider in psychology." Other credentialing organizations exist, such as the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP), which grants diplomate status to professionally reviewed practitioners in various areas, and may also be utilized by counseling psychologists to reflect advanced specialized standing. In general, such professional credentials help both public consumers of psychological services and other referring agents better assess general quality of psychologist providers and also help better match available psychological expertise with requested services by consumers.

The recent development of national and transnational professional alliances has been enhanced by Internet Web-site capabilities and the capacity for distance technologically based service delivery. Most psychology organizations involving licensing and credentialing now post information for direct access by the public. This provides a means for accessing accurate information regarding the conditions under which psychologists provide services. To further exemplify the international policy ramifications of professional service mobility, in both North America and the European Union international trade treaties in goods and services such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) are forcing the development of mobility standards for professional practice in a variety of professions. In Canada and Europe, in particular, work is progressing toward

more universal standards for psychologist mobility. While Canadian psychology has completed guidelines for psychologist mobility under the Canadian Agreement for Internal Trade (AIT), the European Federation of Professional Psychology Associations (EFPPA) and the European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP) have set guidelines for the training of psychotherapists. The European Certificate of Psychotherapy now facilitates the mobility of psychologists and the mutual recognition of credentials.

4. Context for Counseling Psychology’s Global Development

Although counseling psychology is a broad-based and inclusive branch of psychology, certain themes still tend to define counseling psychology across countries where it has had some time to develop and is more formally organized. Three of these themes—the world of work, the counseling process, and human diversity—will be highlighted as examples of contributions the branch has made to the discipline and that serve as potential springboards for work in the domain of human and global sustainability.

4.1. Counseling Psychology and the World of Work

Globally, counseling psychology has been a force in the development of vocational theories and methods of assessment for articulating the multitude of factors involved in career choices and career development. Historical formative factors and counseling procedures will be surveyed in the following sections.

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Biographical Sketches

George Hurley, PhD, professor and training director, University Counselling Centre, Memorial University of Newfoundland, has been on the Centre's faculty since 1980. Besides his duties as director of the centre, he is also interested in program development, outreach, and consultation to the university and the community at large. His theoretical orientation is based on an integrationist model. Among other professional activities, Dr. Hurley is past president of the Canadian Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology (CRHSPP) and past chair of the Section on Counselling Psychology, CPA. He holds a cross appointment to the Discipline of Family Practice, Faculty of Medicine. Dr. Hurley is a registered psychologist (Newfoundland) and is listed in the Canadian and National (U.S.) Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology.

Michael Doyle, Ed.D. (University of Toronto) is associate professor and consultation/outreach, coordinator for the University Counselling Centre, Memorial University of Newfoundland. Following completion of his doctoral studies in applied psychology from the University of Toronto, he worked as a practitioner in the mental health field. Current activities at the centre involve counseling and psychotherapy, teaching a university-wide credit course (UCC 2020: Applied Cognitive and Affective Learning Strategies), and outreach consultations. His research interests include risk taking in students enrolled in study skills courses, study processes in students, the effects of distance on the quality of professional supervision, regulatory and professional issues, and coping skills. He is an executive member of the Canadian University and College Counselling Association, and archivist for the Section on Counselling Psychology, a division of the Canadian Psychological Association. He is also past chair of the Newfoundland Board of Examiners in Psychology. Dr. Doyle is a registered psychologist (Newfoundland) and is listed in the Canadian Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology. He also maintains a part-time practice in psychological services and consulting.