

# Counseling psychology

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A fuller understanding of clients' problems within the province of psychological counseling involves not only the cogency of the framework employed but also how it applies in practice. Mindful of the fact that there is no single intervention or explanation that can possibly apply to all cases; there is a pressing need for counseling psychologists to take into consideration the client's point of view; that is, how the client understands, appropriates and integrates for his/herself his/her current situation.

If we are to characterize the past two decades, we may say that it is noted for an increased emphasis on methodological diversity, not only in approaches but also, and more importantly, in terms of alternative research methods in counseling psychology (Goldman, 1976; Howard, 1983). In this aspect, the emergence of pragmatism allowed for diverse approaches in counseling psychology which values both objective and subjective knowledge (Hanson, 2005, p.

226). Mindful of this significant shift in theorizing and research, this paper seeks to articulate the underpinnings of the generalist approach to counseling psychology, their problems and limitations so as to provide feasible solutions for a more pragmatic approach that is beneficial not only for the clients but for the practitioner as well. The dominant approach in the profession of counseling psychology is the generalist model of intervention.

The generalist approach is essentially a problem-solving approach which operates on the assumption that as experts, psychologists know best, since they have the necessary knowledge, skills and training in handling clients' problems. Six interrelated steps/stages are involved in the generalist

intervention model: (1) assessment, (2) planning, (3) intervention, (4) evaluation, (5) termination, and (6) follow up.

The essential difference between the generalist and the person-centered approach in terms of intervention is that the generalist sees the relationship in the “ expert-client” kind of way, whereas, it is not necessarily the case for the person-centered approach. The counseling psychologist who employs the person-centered approach knows the value of emphatic listening and applies it to his/her clients for this will be of great help in addressing the client’s need for positive regard from others.

If the client feels comfortable with the counseling psychologist because the latter knows how to listen, then this will be of great help in boosting the client’s self-worth. The person-centered approach was developed from the client-centered approach by Carl Rogers. Regarding the impact of the person-centered approach, Krebs and Blackman (1988) wrote: “ The person-centered approach has had impact on domains outside of therapy such as family life, education, leadership, conflict resolution, politics and community health.

” On a preliminary note, it may be said that for Krebs and Blackman, the person-centered approach has many interesting and fruitful applications. As was noted earlier, Roger’s person-centered therapy is a modification of his client-centered therapy, the foundation of which is a phenomenological and existential framework on construing a theory of personality. An adequate theory of personality, as Roger sees it, must take into account the core notions of (1) human nature and (2) the human condition and the reason for improving the aforementioned condition.

He writes: " the core of man's nature is essentially positive" (1961, p. 73). He adopts an organismic view of the person in a positive way. It is positive in the sense that the person, as an organism, is driven by an actualizing tendency. This idea is actually not something new and may be compared to the ancient Greeks idea of the telos which is the Greek term for end or purpose. In Aristotle's view, for instance, man's telos involves the actualization of the distinctive human function.

It is, in this direction then that human beings ought to move [that is, the actualization of the human potentials]. " The good life is a process not a state of being. It is a direction, not a destination (Rogers, 1961, p. 186)". The Self then for Rogers, is driven by the said actualizing tendency. A fully-functioning person for Rogers is a person who is developing, or if I may use Aristotle's word " flourishing". The fully-functioning person flourishes, so to speak, that is, geared towards development. Development in this sense, would involve personality development.

Since man's nature, as Rogers claims, is positive then he/she will seek personality development. If the person-centered approach to counseling psychology is more appropriate in terms of producing successful outcomes, then perhaps we may consider juxtaposing such an approach with the constructivist framework. According to Neimeyer (1995) constructivism represents a meta-theory and epistemologic stance that emphasises self-conceiving, self-organising, and proactive features of human knowing (cited in Savickas, 2000, p. 60).

Moreover, by juxtaposing the person-centered approach with constructivism, both the client and the counseling psychologist may continuously review,  
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revise and re-orient themselves with the things that they know and how they live their lives. This is to say that there is no monopoly in terms of the learning process that takes place since both the client and the counseling psychologist takes an active part in the meaning-making process. This way, psychology becomes humanistic. Rogers' person-centered approach is of this type.

Humanistic psychology, as a reaction to positivistic psychology, sheds light on important questions that matter, not only for the client and practitioner, learner and teacher. Schneider, et. al, summarized these questions as follows: " What does it mean to be fully experientially human? " and " How does that understanding illuminate the fulfilled or vital life? " (Schneider, et. al, 2001, p. xx). These questions are questions of universal concern and have been framed in different ways by different thinkers in different periods in the history of ideas.

In the final analysis, we may take refuge in the thought that developing humanistic psychology brings us closer to understanding our human condition, our situatedness. In so doing, it also gives us a fuller understanding of our very own humanity. For it is by knowing who we are and where we stand can we chart the rightful path towards a just and humane society. References Goldman, L. (1976). " A Revolution in Counseling Psychology. " *Journal of Counseling Psychology*. 23: 543-552. Hanson, W. E. (2005). " Mixed Methods Research Designs in Counseling Psychology. " *Journal of Counseling Psychology*. 52: 224-235. Howard, G. S. (1983).

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