

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



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Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson is a Registered Doctoral Psychologist with expertise in Counselling Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Human Resource Development. He earned qualifications in Social Work too. Duly note, he has five postsecondary degrees, which is a lot, of which 3 are undergraduate level. His research interests include memes as applied to self-knowledge, the evolution of religion and spirituality, the aboriginal self's structure, residential school syndrome, prior learning recognition and assessment, and the treatment of attention deficit disorder and suicide ideation. In addition, he works in anxiety and trauma, addictions, and psycho-educational assessment, and relationship, family, and group counselling.

Here we talk about racism, white supremacy, power dynamics, sense of unworthiness, cults, dealing with racism and cults, and more.

Listing of previous sessions with links at the end of the interview.

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 publically 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 have minds. I think his judgement 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.

For previous sessions, please see: Ask Dr. Robertson 1 — Counselling and Psychology, Ask Dr. Robertson 2 — Psychotherapy, Ask Dr. Robertson 3 — Social and Psychological Sciences Gone Wrong, Ask Dr. Robertson 4 — Just You and Me, One-on-One Counselling, Ask Dr. Robertson 5 — Self-Actualization, Boys, and Young Males: Solution:Problem::Hammer:Nail, Ask Dr. Robertson 6 — It's All About Me, Me, Meme, and the Self: From First Nations to Second Nations, Building Third Culture Counselling, and Ask Dr. Robertson (and Teela) 7 — Elate, Hawkeye on Roberts: A Happy Counselling Psychology Family Affair, Ask Dr. Robertson 8 — A Social Work Betrayal of Male, and Ask Dr. Robertson 9 — The Age of Psychology, Low Self-Esteem, Crazy Making, Schizophrenia, Racism, and Religious Fundamentalism.

Image Credit: Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson.