

What Is A Psychologist  
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This article is written in response to Dr Wylie's article in the May/June 2008 issue of National Psychologist in which he talked about the ongoing degradation to the status of psychology in clinical practice.

Truer words never spoken. In most medical settings, psychologists neither are held in esteem nor looked to as identifiably skilled and able to intervene with behavior, mood, or cognition, etc. In other contexts they are but a segment of a slew of people who 'do therapy'. Hopefully, in individual situations, psychologists can get to make a difference that can be noticed and appreciated. In medical settings, for the most part, however, persons outside the field may not even imagine a need for psychology because they may not identify circumstances as psychological in nature, or, if they do, they may identify them as 'given' and not susceptible to intervention. Further, "1:1", "talk therapy", or "support" (poor nomenclature for psychological service) are seen as tasks almost anyone could do, even most staff members if they had the time or inclination. To a significant degree, it is that bad.

*Psychology suffers from a really weak language of **description**.* It also suffers from really weak education as it has veered away from its academic and scholastic underpinnings. Measured against a legacy of scholarliness, it is a crisis. There has become too much emphasis on the ("professional") *psychologist* and too little on the mainstay *psychology*. It is sad irony that while alot of rightful effort and attention must be applied to liability, responsibility, and professional maintenance, at the same time, to those outside the field, professional demand and estimation is low, skill is unknown or nebulous, and training compared to other 'provider' (another poor word use) types, and in general, is moot. Tangentially, I heard Howard Stern opine on Letterman that he

would never consider what to him is an essentially sub par psychologist PhD type, that instead he goes to a 'real' (medical/psychiatrist) 'doctor' for talk sessions. Yet, in today's market in general, who knows or who should know most about behavior and the inner workings of psychic life?

Also, as pointed out by Dr Wylie, the product of organized psychology does not converge with the reality of psychology on the ground. Instead of a scramble for more niches for psychologists, there should be focus on the **fundamental basis** for psychology at large, as well as compared with anyone or anything else in the mood-behavior-cognition business. This basis will continue to erode with EBT, a foolhardy shortsighted idea. The interpretation of mood/behavior/causality - as well as the remedy - can be interpreted quite differently by psychology vs other disciplines; yet psychology continues to lose *as well as yield* its epistemologic edge to market forces. In addition, there is a lamentable squandering of the toil of minions in psychology who have painstakingly studied the parts, pieces, and intricacies of all kinds of behavior, emotion, and thought, from all points of view. Those parts, pieces, and intricacies require even more study as the techno wired world of humans changes before our very eyes.

Psychology as both a body of knowledge and a body of unknowns is the be-all and end-all examination and description of what it is to be alive. To quote from a previous article I wrote, "it is for the psychologist to explain, illuminate, & meticulously depict the vicissitudes & significance of human psyche & behavior". To be recognized or valued for what they do, psychologists must study deep and long all kinds of things about humans, animals, and life; be guided by what has come before; and observe deep and long and always over many situations, ever learning, to become practitioners in a personalized way that can be most effective for them. Theoretical and practical advances that materialize from individual vision are the bedrock of good and artful science too.

No amount of outreach can overcome loopholes in credulity, value, and validity if intellectual rigor and approach are short circuited. Psychologists have to ante up, have to be and to show who they are, what they do. EBT, for one, cannot substantiate mettle. It does substantiate, however, a feeble attempt to continue to get paid (along with other groups who will use EBT approaches) - fundamental criticisms of EBT notwithstanding. Ideally, it is the love, knowledge and experience of psychology that guides a vocational path of study (the horse) and a practice that follows (the cart).

An alternate course of action might be to drop 'psychology-psychologist' labeling as it exists in contemporary terms and use words other than these to identify the genre. Something like 'EBTers' (tongue-in-cheek) could be telling. Still, issues of vaguery about the distinctiveness, quality, and value of a grouped category of practitioner remain.

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