

Review of
Interdisciplinary Handbook of the Person-Centered
Approach: Research and Theory
and
Interdisciplinary Applications of the Person-Centered
Approach

Editors

Jeffrey H. D. Cornelius-White

Renate Motschnig-Pitrik

Michael Lux

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**Reviewed by Jerold D. Bozarth, Professor Emeritus, The
University of Georgia, USA**

This two-volume set is a massive undertaking that offers a stepping-stone to a paradigmatic shift of perceptions and actions in society. It was originally conceived as a single volume project; however, the wealth of content material overflowed into two books. The two volumes can work very well read separately or examined together.

The first book offers a compendium of theoretical and scientific inquiry to support this undertaking. The second book focuses on multiple applications of the person-centered approach and helps with the effort to “identify and characterize” bridges of the Person-Centered Approach to other disciplines. The editors excel at culminating an integration of disciplines, scientific cultures, and research approaches. They offer a snapshot of significant science going through “early and mature” phases. They note specifically this significant science as including: 1) Cognition, feeling, and intuition; 2) Basic ideas and application-orientation; 3) Quantitative and qualitative methods; 4) Human and Technique/instrument; and 5) Discipline and Art.

“In a nutshell,” the first volume “aims to explore the contributions the PCA *in interconnection and resonance with other approaches or disciplines* is making to moving forward as a human species” (v. 1, p. 6) The second volume is summarized in slightly different language: it “aims to explore and testify how the PCA contributes to moving forward as a human species in a *multitude of application areas*” (v. 2, p. xi).

The following themes and objectives convey the editors' Volume 1 aims: to explore the power, depth and impact of the person-centered approach, articulate how its theory is consistent with various interdisciplinary constructs, propose an integrative framework and conceptual map of the geography of the approach, respond to international calls for interdisciplinary studies, introduce the approach to those who are less familiar with it and reveal it as a meta-approach, help those who already identify, practice and research within the approach to engage with broader literature, introduce the importance of the approach for research paradigms, competencies and problems, stimulate further research and theory development by articulating questions, and contribute to helping us move forward as a human species.

These mega-massive goals are grounded with a succinct explanation of the structure of the first book. There are fundamentally three sections, 1) the introduction that includes the conceptual essence of the approach and the range of linking phenomena, 2) the main section containing Parts 2-8 that connect diverse disciplines to the PCA, and 3) a reflective and linking section that “rounds up” the book and relates it to the sibling book about applications of the approach.

Volume 2, the interdisciplinary applications book, aims to invite bridge building and introduce domains of impact as well as application of the person-centered approach. It includes clinical chapters about both person-centered and experiential psychotherapies, and chapters about person-centered medicine, care for special needs persons, education, technology integration, applications related to children and families, organizations, business, leadership, conflict management and constructive communication.

Suffice it to say that the goals of the combined books are admirable if not downright grandiose. Given the scope of the objectives and the varying views of the chapters, most authored and co-authored by writers other than the editors, the editors do a remarkable task connecting the dots.

The introductory and concluding chapters of each volume, which include conceptual maps, are resonant with the science, philosophy, attitudes and trajectory of Rogers' 1959 theory statement, "A Theory of Therapy, Personality and Interpersonal Relationships as Developed in the Client-centered Framework." The editors conclude the undertaking by pointing to Rogers' later conception of the formative tendency and the approach being an emergent paradigm centered around a unitary motivation construct and focusing upon "the quality of interpersonal interaction and a whole-person approach" (v.2, p. 249).

It is difficult to argue against the luminous intentions and conclusions proposed and arrived upon within this massive work. However, one doubt concerning the undertaking can be raised. Does the quest to integrate, even when so beautifully seeking to carry forward the essence of the person-centered approach, to varying degrees, dismiss the radically different paradigm of Carl Rogers, namely, "... that man's ultimate reliance is upon his own experience" (cited in Van Belle, 1980, p. 13). Does it mix questionable basic assumptions in relation to Rogers' theory of interpersonal relationships

without identifying resounding differences from Rogers' conceptualization of the person and the relationship? Does the work call for a spectrum of expert as expert? Given its wealth of over fifty individual voices including the three editors who also write a chapter, a volume-wide characterization is somewhat compromised. Nevertheless, the two books offer a solid foundation to further deliberations on the premises of the theory of Carl Rogers in practice and process.

References

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- Van Belle, H. A. (1980). *Basic intent and therapeutic approach of Carl R. Rogers*. Toronto, Canada: Wedge Publishing Foundation.