

Video Review

Carl Rogers and the Person-Centered Approach

Howard Kirschenbaum

Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, UK: PCCS Books (2003).

88.13 British Pounds Sterling

65 minutes

Howard Kirschenbaum is a familiar name to the Person-Centered community. Among his numerous publications are *The Carl Rogers Reader* (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1989) and the biography, *On Becoming Carl Rogers* (Kirschenbaum, 1979). The biography is a person-centered classic, an outstanding resource so frequently quoted that it is difficult to read anything about Carl Rogers without noting it in the references.

Howard Kirschenbaum has written and published another classic volume, this time in video format, with his production *Carl Rogers and the Person-Centered Approach*. This sixty-five minute video offers a concise, informative, and touching look at Carl Rogers' life, Person-Centered theory, and Person-Centered practice. The production level of the video is high, and Kirschenbaum, himself, acts as the narrator. This is an added treat as Kirschenbaum is personable and talented.

The video begins with pleasant, soft piano and a lovely profile photo of Rogers. Kirschenbaum offers a short introduction and begins his story with Rogers' childhood. Included are many photographs of the Rogers' family and home and Carl as a child. Kirschenbaum discusses Rogers' conservative, Protestant parents, Julia and Walter Rogers, and their efforts to protect their children from "corrupt influences." Carl Rogers is described as having few friends outside the family and as sensitive and easily hurt by teasing. Kirschenbaum continues with an account of the family move to a farm and a teenage Carl Rogers honing his scientific skills with agricultural experiments and deciding to become a farmer. The viewer follows Rogers as he enrolls in the University of Wisconsin, switches majors from agriculture to history in preparation for a religious career, travels to China for an International Christian Youth Conference, and transfers to Union Theological Seminary. Kirschenbaum guides the viewer through Rogers' marriage to Helen, the influence of psychology courses and theorists, and his transfer to Columbia University Teachers College in pursuit of his doctorate in Psychology.

Kirschenbaum illuminates the life of Rogers while deftly weaving together Rogers' career moves, family, publications, awards, service, and development of the Person-Centered Approach (PCA). The viewer follows Rogers from New York City to upstate New York, Ohio, Chicago, Wisconsin, and California. Many of Rogers' books are shown and discussed in detail. A sampling of these include *Clinical Treatment of the Problem Child* (1939), *Counseling and Psychotherapy* (1942), *Client-Centered Therapy* (1951), *On Becoming a Person* (1961), *A Way of Being* (1980), and *Freedom to Learn* (1969). Kirschenbaum integrates these and other writings into the unfolding life of Rogers, his theory, and his practice.

Rogers' numerous and unique contributions to the field are also outlined. Kirschenbaum discusses Rogers' popularization of the term "client," the recording and publishing of client transcripts, research on therapy processes and outcomes, and the use

of a single counseling approach to all clients and client problems. He discusses the development of Person-Centered Theory and its metamorphoses from Non-Directive through Client-Centered to Person-Centered and its application to individuals, groups, encounter groups, and to global peace work. Kirschenbaum discusses Rogers' Distinguished Professional Contribution Award, Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award, and his nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Kirschenbaum has included brilliantly edited clips of Rogers with clients. Audio clips include Rogers with Mike (the high-school student) in front of an audience of approximately 300 school counselors, and Rogers with Loretta (an institutionalized woman diagnosed with schizophrenia). As the viewer follows the audio and reads the corresponding narrative, it becomes clear (and clear within a short period of time), that each client gains insight as Rogers offers the necessary and sufficient conditions. Video clips include Rogers with Miss Munn, and Rogers co-facilitating in the Oscar-winning encounter group film. All of these fabulously edited clips are powerfully poignant and inspirational: classic Rogers, classic PCA, and perhaps, PCA at its best.

As a person, practitioner, and academic, I am particularly excited to know that a video now exists that offers the viewer numerous opportunities to see: (1) the actual application of a classic PCA, (2) Carl Rogers at work with individuals and groups, and (3) PCA with a variety of clients and client problems.

This video is jam-packed full of photos, stories, videos, and moving moments. I am impressed with the artful end-product that Kirschenbaum has so skillfully fit into this beautiful 65-minute package. Without a doubt, this video is another significant biography by Kirschenbaum; an informative, moving look at the work and times of Carl Rogers. The video stands on its own or as an adjunct to Kirschenbaum's 1979 Carl Rogers biography, *On Becoming Carl Rogers*. It is an accurate, concise, comprehensive, and touching biography not to be missed by those practicing, learning, or teaching the Person-Centered approach. Thank-you, Howie, for informing and enriching the Person-Centered community with your magnificent work.

References

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