CULTURAL INFLUENCES VS.

ACTUALIZING TENDENCY:

IS THE PERSON-CENTERED APPROACH

A UNIVERSAL PARADIGM?

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Abstract

This paper explores the role a culture plays under the Person-Centered Approach (PCA) paradigm, and argues the possibility for the PCA to be applied in a collectivist culture. Taiwan, where eastern philosophies and modernization are intertwined, was long colonized and governed in a dictatorial way. In such a context, whether the principle of the PCA is applicable is challenging. In this paper, both the challenges of Chinese culture and the historical and political aspects of Taiwan are reviewed. Additionally, social context and the PCA are contrasted from a perspective of being an individual in a collectivist culture. The PCA's position is mirrored by some eastern philosophies, and the paper argues that a Taiwanese's natural tendency exists beneath the vicissitude of social context. Taiwanese culture plays a role of blocking people's actualizing tendency. The paper highlights the challenges of some particular cultural blocks. When a growth-promoting climate is created, persons get to experience it. More inner freedom develops, and the natural tendency directs the person to self-actualization.

Introduction

Raskin and Rogers (1995) indicate that the Person-Centered Approach (PCA) can be applied to every possible context, even to international conflict resolution.
Their position, however, does not seem to be supported by my experiences in Taiwan, in southeastern Asia. The obstacles and complications that I have encountered when working from the PCA principles in my teaching and counseling experiences in a college in this collectivist (i.e., Taiwanese) culture have been presented (Wang, 1999, 2000). The inconsistency between theoretical statement and practice remains.

Rogers (1969) presents several qualities that facilitate learning in the classroom. These qualities are genuineness, prizing/acceptance/trust, and empathic understanding. "Freedom" is also a crucial factor; Rogers (1969) defines it as "an inner, subjective, existential thing that all living persons may experience" (p. 269). According to Rogers, these qualities are necessary and sufficient for effective learning, and for a free climate that enables a person to grow out of his inner strength. Nevertheless, most Taiwanese students, from my experiences, could not adapt to the free climate I created or to the qualities I experienced. Since this also exists in the multicultural context of American classroom (e.g., Cornelius-White, 2002), it seems that multicultural contexts challenge the implication of the PCA.

Teaching in Taiwan, I view myself as a facilitator who brings up certain designated materials or activities for students to motivate their learning, instead of a teacher who lectures and gives answers. Materials are designated because, from my experience, Taiwanese students have trouble taking complete freedom all at once in their educational system. For example, I invite students to evaluate their performance in an activity, but it turns out they do not and return their power to me. Sometimes I remind students that attendance in a class is not required, and encourage them to think of their reasons for attending or being no-shows, but usually attendance remains the same, bound by regulations internalized in their minds. Besides that I tell students to question my words and recognize that my opinions about right and wrong might not be universal, sometimes I share with students what I think a college student should be (having a critical mind and ability to express oneself). I may say that students themselves are responsible for their academic achievements. These are some of the limits to the freedom I offer, but beyond that I am pretty open to students in terms of their various responses and value systems.

However, the limited freedom I offer is interpreted by Taiwanese students as reckless, disorderly, and unprepared teaching, which turns out fruitless for them. They see genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and empathy as counseling skills that are to be obtained from practicing. Although there also exist exceptions in my experience (e.g., Wang, 2002), Taiwanese usually suffered while being provided opportunities for exploring whatever they choose, in order to actualize their potential. "Freedom," as Rogers (1969) describes it, is not welcomed readily by Taiwanese students' inner selves. In their reality, they simply want "correct" answers from authority figures such as therapists, teachers, and group leaders. The concepts such as "choice," "discovery," and "responsibility" in Rogers' (1969, p. 269) understanding of "freedom" are not valued and they do not happen in the classroom.

Rogers (1969) posits that imparting knowledge and skills is unimportant on the assumption that adults, as teachers, are not really sure what students should
know. Unfortunately, that is exactly what the Taiwan educational system has been doing. Rogers (1969) declared that “modern man lives in an environment which is continually changing” (p. 104). Hence, what we currently assume important will not necessarily be a good guide for the future. By contrast, Confucianism, the dominant philosophy of Taiwan’s educational system, supports the role of a teacher to aim at transmitting wisdom, imparting knowledge, and resolving doubts. (Confucius, c.a. 500 B. C. E.). This assumption directly contradicts Rogers’ goals for education, including concepts about effective learning and the role of a teacher being a facilitator.

In counseling, likewise, clients expect something that they can bring home with them, such as advice, skills, or suggestions. It seems that an approach in which an expert gives advice to clients, diagnoses their problems, and assigns homework after sessions fits Taiwanese culture much better. Freedom to realize their actualizing tendency and fulfill their potentiality is not welcomed.

According to Rogers (1959), the actualizing tendency is a natural inner strength that exists in all persons and that orients them to self-actualization. This is inherent and irreversible -- a core in all humans. If this is the case, the actualizing tendency also lives in people in a collectivist culture, according to the PCA, and it leads persons in a constructive direction. However, this assumption (Brody, 1999) seems to contradict my experience in Taiwanese culture. My speculation is that culture may assume a greater role than what the PCA claims -- although the inner strength of the actualizing tendency is probably the more important force for people of all cultures. So in collectivist cultures people who practice person-centeredness need to be alert both to qualities which need sensitive understanding in order to be respectful of the society and to ways to make room for expansion of the individual’s reality as self-awareness of his or her actualizing tendency emerges.

Pedersen (1987) argues that most counseling theories, arising from the West, are culturally specific. Usher (1989) argues that the PCA is too individualistic, that it emphasizes the client per se and sense of independence, and ignores his/her support system (Pedersen, 1987; Usher, 1989). The PCA emphasizes the concept of “here-and-now,” and it neglects the client’s history (Usher, 1989). Whether the PCA can be as effective in a context outside the individualistic West is worth exploring. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to explore the cultural influence on Taiwanese that may limit them in developing their actualizing tendency in a free climate. I will discuss the concept of culture, specifically my culture in Taiwan, as well as the actualizing tendency of the PCA theory, with attention to the contrast between them. I begin with a review of literature from the past fifteen years on the subject of Chinese culture.

**Chinese Culture and Taiwan**

**Chinese Culture: An Asian Culture that Confucianism dominates**

Culture is mostly defined from perspectives of demographic variables, status variables, ethnographic variables (nationality, ethnicity, language, and religion), as well as affiliations (e.g., Dzeng, 1996, Pedersen, 1991). According to Dzeng
(1996), culture is a set of life styles that has been followed by a group of people; people think and behave based on a series of thoughts, beliefs, and value systems.

Jackson and Meadows Jr. (1991) reviewed the definitions of culture in history, which correspond in scope to Dzeng (1996); however, Jackson and Meadows Jr. argued that these definitions are superficial due to the limited dimensions being covered. They referred to Nobel’s ideas on culture in 1980. Nobel declared that culture can be examined beyond observable behavior; the deep structure of culture comprises philosophical assumptions that are not bounded to time, space, or a specific group. These philosophical assumptions include views on ontology, cosmology, epistemology, axiology, logic, and process. (See Jackson & Meadows Jr., 1991, p. 74). Jackson and Meadows Jr. then inferred that the Asian conceptual system emphasizes an ontology of cosmic unity. A person equally forges three parts of self, that is, mind, body, and spirit, to become one with the universe. Asian culture, according to Jackson and Meadows Jr., highly values the cohesiveness of the group. Individuals are part of their families and the whole society. People, in the collectivist culture, are born to fight for the utmost benefit of “significant” groups; individual interests and concerns should be minimized.

The Chinese culture is one of Asian cultures. For thousands of years Chinese history describes a series of empires in which some elite -- usually male -- governed and determined systems, even determined the lives of commoners. Establishing relationships with the elite was important for ordinary people to exercise any power at all. This has been impacted by Confucianism (Yeh, 1991) -- the one, if not exclusive, ideological philosophy that dominates Chinese culture. Those who were in power would calculate their own benefits to extend the connection with ordinary people (Hwang, 1988). Those with no power had no control whatsoever. The only alternative was resigning to the authority and believing that good deeds would turn out to bring something good in return; the super power (God) will make the final judgment. Vulnerability and insecurity last from generation to generation with inner and external freedom swept away.

In Confucianism, ethics is the primary concept (Chang, 1989; Yeh, 1991), and it, the foundation of social order, stresses the relationship of one person to the other and of the role each person plays (Yeh, 1991). Confucianism is also strongly status-obsessed. It places foci on regulation according to status, and on the way people behave to conform to the regulation (Chang, 1989). Etiquette is what Confucius, throughout all his life, upholds -- that an individual ought to behave in certain ways according to his status and the context (Chang, 1989; Yeh, 1991). Therefore, it is relationship and/or context, instead of matters per se, that determines how a situation is handled, and/or how one person talks to the other (Yeh, 1991). For example, a man might yell at a stranger for getting the former involved in a car accident. But he is unlikely to do so if the latter happens to be his friend. Another example is that the elder or senior should be respected. Their experience-sharing is an indispensable short-cut for youngsters to follow. This helps to explain why students, in my teaching experience, attend the class without participation. It is because they are told, by themselves or significant others, “good students do not skip classes,” “it is mandatory to go to school,” and so forth. When I invite them to discuss or speak up, they lower their eyes and/or keep silent, and wait for me to answer my own questions,
Because Confucianism emphasizes ceremonial etiquette and regulations, questions stirring up intellectual thinking, such as asking “why,” are not its concerns. Although Confucius sets high standards for human behavior in his ideologies, how people practice in their daily lives is another story (Yeh, 1991). Thus, Confucianism emphasizes personal introspection but people actually are more involved in a struggle for power (Yeh, 1991). The gap between ideology and practice has been more in popular consciousness since concepts of humanitarianism and pragmatism were introduced to this society (Yeh, 1991). In these Western approaches to life, a sense of equity and personal boundary is clearly defined and legitimated both explicitly and implicitly.

Buddhism and Taoism are another two influential ideologies in Chinese culture. The Buddhist worldview is unique among religious philosophies in that all living creatures are equal in the cycle of reincarnation. Taoism claims that the weak is more resilient than the strong; emptiness means full; no acts at all lead to the world running of its own accord and people becoming themselves. In other words, no force external to the world is necessary for being or becoming. Taiwanese focus on forging their own mind, body, and spirit, as well as on the idea of seizing the moment, and these tendencies are rooted in these ideologies. Taiwanese tend to believe in intuition and insightfulness, and sometimes are attracted towards being experiential due to these influences. Yu (2002) elaborates that all people influenced by Chinese culture are in one way or another Taoists. So there are characteristics in some Chinese philosophies that provide a balance to the strict role of etiquette advocated by Confucianism. However, in modern Taiwanese society, these philosophies are not mainstream. Confucianism keeps a much more dominant role among all.

**Taiwan: A Long-time Colonized State Under Dictators that Carries A Political Burden**

Besides the ideologies of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, contemporary Taiwan is also influenced by the Western wind and is on its “halfway” to democracy. Because of Taiwan’s unique history, politics is an important factor directing the society (Yeh, 1991). Thus, understanding Taiwan from the perspective of current political development is crucial.

A new presidency was taken by an opposition party in 2000 and this is the first time, in the history of five thousand years, that a democratic transition of power has taken place in Chinese societies anywhere in the world. Taiwan used to be a colony of Netherlands, Spain and Japan for hundreds of years. After 1945, the Kuomintang was defeated by the Chinese communists and fled to Taiwan, becoming a ruling party for 55 years without competition or making much progress. Taiwan was considered a temporary outpost from which top leaders could recover the mainland. Martial law was practiced after 1949; it turned out that freedom of speech, the press, and assembly became suspended. Therefore, it is fair to say that no governments on the Taiwan Island ever have taken the people and the land seriously; and Taiwanese never have been masters of their own lives. Constructive thoughts and actions for building up the land, accumulating assets and regarding welfare for the people had never been produced until the late 1980s.
The forefathers and mothers of 85% of Taiwanese came from Mainland China at different points of time (Zich, 1993), and this affects ethnographic and political issues. The state identity is ambiguous and undetermined. The assertion of the Kuomintang about the state identity is not held by a significant percentage of Taiwanese. The secretive military agency snooped on citizens to solidify the ruling power (Shapiro, 1999). Several tragic ethnographic and political incidents took place out of fighting against dictatorship and seeking democracy. Dissenters were either jailed or killed without trial; those who hustled up survived.

The situation then was even worse than what Rogers (1977) describes in chapters of *The Person-Centered Approach and The Oppressed* (p. 105-114) and *The Power of The Powerless* (p. 186-204). The official interpretations of these incidents are from the viewpoint of the Kuomintang interests. The personal stories of Taiwanese reveal the words of the documents do not come close to actual experiences. People could hardly think of the next sunrise; they distrusted each other intensely. A constructive climate of trust, hope, and looking-ahead rarely existed. People felt themselves too powerless to claim their rights; only "heaven" could determine destinies for people on this land. This attitude is supported by all the cultural patterns which embody the Taiwanese tendency (especially for women) to accept only that self-value which is more externally attributed (e.g., Lao, 1978; Lao, Chuang & Young, 1977).

Nevertheless, all this has been gradually changing since 1987, when the martial law was ended. Today, following productive and varied ideologies, as well as a history of being colonized and dictated to, the strengths of ancient philosophies and modern democracy in Taiwanese minds struggle against each other, and this fact leads to a peculiar flock of people, in a unique environment, who are seeking some peaceful destiny by chaotic ways. Under such circumstances, "having something to grab," like strategies, methods, and/or skills, may be the more secure way to follow.

**Educational System in Modern Taiwan's Society**

Education is widespread; the educational system in Taiwan is a major part of its own tradition. As mentioned earlier, Confucianism played the exclusive role in our educational system before the Western world passed its influence to the East. Intelligence is almost the only quality that adult Taiwanese value in educating their children. The unique focus on intelligence (a "national value" in education) frustrates students who cannot get admitted to high schools and universities, and more profoundly, it has a great impact on the way teachers impart content.

The aim of classroom teaching is but passing examinations, and this is completely opposite to the goal of education identified by Rogers (1969), "the facilitation of change and learning" (p. 104). Teachers all use the same texts and ways of teaching to help students achieve this goal. Students were encouraged to recite the textbooks and were evaluated by this competency. Correct answers were given and independent thinking was unnecessary. Lately, after martial law ended in 1987 and education reform started less than a decade ago, reasoning became more important than reciting. But still, creativity and/or spontaneity are not brought about from either students or teachers. Students do not have to, and are not expected to, ask questions. Only fulfillment of external obligations matters,
Unsurprisingly, it turns out that students do not like to learn and do not know why they have to learn. They simply cram themselves with “right” answers.

Teachers are expected to be dominant. There is an old saying, “A teacher one day, a parent forever.” In this status-obsessed society, one can barely, perhaps never, argue with his/her teachers. If he or she does, he or she is labeled, by him/herself and by people at large, as disobedient, rebellious, and defiant. That a Rogerian teacher would be a facilitator -- with students responsible for what they learn -- is unlikely to become generally acceptable. That is to say, if I want to exercise the PCA qualities in teaching and counseling, I am fighting against the mainstream of educational philosophy in Taiwan, and this would never come to an end.

Social Context and The Actualizing Tendency

The struggle between authority and the powerless remains one of the primary locations for application of the PCA principles. Natiello (1990) says that authoritarian power is traditionally accepted in the world. Accordingly, Taiwan’s context in history seems globally common to this world in general, however different it is in detail. Rogers (1977) himself in his book, *Carl Rogers on Personal Power*, attempted to demonstrate that principles of the PCA can be exercised in the experience of the oppressed and the powerless. He shared the experience of Paulo Freire who wrote on the experience of working with illiterate Brazilian peasants who were treated, by the oppressor as well as themselves, as not human. Rogers also reported the experience of medical people who invited health consumers to a conference where confrontations went on in the encounter group. Rogers, with another author, shared the experience from Graceville, Massachusetts of this other author, who was staff in a summer camp, fighting against a camp dictator.

The differences between these experiences and Taiwan’s situation from my perspective are two fold. First, the fights against authority in Rogers’ stories happened in small clusters of people; however, Taiwanese faced the oppressive atmosphere and intimidating treatment nationwide. Second, the powerless in Rogers’ stories might possibly have been convinced they would not face severe consequences by asking for righteous intervention; and their experience, including TV news, was that asking might realistically bring change. However for Taiwan, there seemed no alternative because of nationwide terror. The oppressed and the powerless assumed speaking their opinions to be their rights in Rogers’ stories, but it is not the case for Taiwanese. Because of these two differences, they will be less ready to receive what Rogers described as the growth-promoting climate created by the three therapeutic conditions and leading to an atmosphere of freedom.

For the dominant obstacle against receptivity to the PCA, I will turn again to social context. I have shown that as distinct from individualistic cultures, collectivist cultures usually place far more emphasis on context in choosing individual behavior and in accounting for social behavior. Ross and Nisbett (1991) made an interesting study documenting this. Self-descriptions by people in collectivist cultures tell more about social context and various relationships they are in; whereas people in individualistic cultures describe their personal attributes
more. This applies to the way Taiwanese, then, predictably see themselves as parts of the whole group (e.g., friends, family, society, etc.). They believe individuals and groups mutually interact and impact each other. The group forms obligations and expectations but individuals reap benefits out of social support from the group (Ross & Nisbett, 1991). If an individual stands out and claims his rights or "self," group interests and expectations are usually raised and he is not surprised to be told to reconsider his call. Being an individual in a collectivist culture and usually bearing social context or cultural differences in mind, I observe social phenomena with awareness of being part of the whole. This historical social phenomenon must be considered, as I move on to describe the PCA's assumptions.

The actualizing tendency moves in "the direction of maintaining, enhancing, and reproducing" the organism (Rogers, 1978, 1979/1980, p. 118); it is inherent (Rogers, 1959). It is a fundamental motivation (Rogers, 1963) and functions as the main assumption about organisms according to PCA (Brodley, 1999; Rogers, 1978, 1979/1980). It is in some ways individual, in others universal. That is, in all organisms the actualizing tendency exists, but its expression for each organism is unique (Brodley, 1999; Rogers, 1978, 1979/1980). The realization of the actualizing tendency develops the person independent from external control (Rogers, 1978, 1979/1980). It is operative at all times under favorable or unfavorable circumstances; however, it can possibly be thwarted or warped (Rogers, 1977; 1978, 1979/1980).

In Oriental philosophies, there are similar concepts to the actualizing tendency. Filled with humanistic sensitivity and deeply believed by Taiwanese, the Zen Buddhist adage says, "everyone has a Buddha nature," meaning all individuals are born having a nature inclined toward goodness. If a person gets enlightenment, his Buddha nature appears, and he or she acts accordingly. If not, his inborn nature becomes concealed, and issues and concerns arise. Taoism believes that things go along with the flow of nature; human efforts will not actually make things happen. Confucianism, on the other hand, believes that making self-conscious effort to actively incorporate the societal norms and values in our conduct and becoming morally excellent (Tu, 1985) is crucial to our heart-mind forging. The Buddhist and Taoist concepts are extremely close to what Rogers stresses about the actualizing tendency that every individual possesses and that we do not need force or effort to get.

Since the Buddhist concept of "Buddha within" that is so believed by Taiwanese is similar to the actualizing tendency of the PCA, Taiwanese could be expected to act in accordance with the basic assumptions of the PCA (Rogers, 1978, 1979/1980) and to be responsive to it. Taiwanese's sense of inner strength vividly exists. However, the reactions of Taiwanese students I have encountered show that they do not think of their inner strength as something that could be encouraged even though it led to actions contrary to what is socially prescribed. From a PCA viewpoint, it seems that Taiwan's culture and history play a role of blocking the natural tendency and of reducing the speed of an individual's path of freeing his/her actualizing tendency. Since the development of a culture is long lasting, expecting a sudden change of its substance would be quixotic. The focus of discussion ought to be, instead, how this natural tendency could be uncovered by providing a free and nurturing climate in a particular context (e.g., classroom).
The PCA posits that a therapist’s attitude nurtures a free and growth-promoting climate for a client to trust his/her natural growth tendency. Genuineness, according to Rogers (1957), is the self-acknowledgement of an individual’s organismic experiences of any given moment. Unconditional positive regard is “the factor that reunifies the self with the actualizing tendency;” a curative attitude for both therapist and client if therapist can be congruent and show empathic understanding for the client (Bozarth, 1998, p. 84). Empathy is to sense the client’s world as if it were the therapist’s, but without losing the “as if” quality (Rogers, 1957). If a listener experiences the three attitudes from the other speaker, the former will have a good chance to experience freedom within. Blocking disappears and the actualizing tendency develops gradually and normally. In practice, experiencing these qualities takes time and is varied from person to person.

The freedom which comes from an individual’s inner being is described by Rogers (1969) in this way:

> It (freedom) is the quality of courage which enables a person to step into the uncertainty of the unknown as he chooses himself. It is the discovery of meaning from within oneself, meaning which comes from listening sensitively and openly to the complexities of what one is experiencing. It is the burden of being responsible for the self one chooses to be. It is the recognition of a person that he is an emerging process, not a static end product (p. 269).

Bozarth (1998), viewing freedom as an emerging process, posits that

> The more non-directive, the more chaotic; the more chaotic, the more individuals struggle for their own direction and structure. The more individuals find their own structures and directions, the more they trust themselves and others. It may be in the struggle itself that is the greatest freeing factor (p. 181).

A therapeutic climate that encourages this could possibly be created in this manner in which a person truly is him/herself. Accordingly, Taiwanese might be in a context of reaching freedom. Natiello (1990) points to a different paradigm of power, collaborative power, which is revolutionary in that it emphasizes mutual openness and responsiveness from both authority and subordinates. There is no distinction between authority and subordinates in the concept of collaborative power. Power in this concept is assumed to be a capacity of everyone in the group. Therefore, Taiwanese struggling with obtaining power, in a traditional sense, for their own good could gradually reach a capacity for experiencing freedom from within through a muddling fashion.

Since the three qualities are necessary and sufficient for effective psychotherapy and human relations (Rogers, 1957), the issue of how to express the three qualities so that the client has a good chance of receiving them becomes crucial. However, Bozarth (1998) argues that the PCA is not an “out-there” strategy that an individual learns to do. He also asserts that “focusing on how to do person-centered therapy is one of the more inhibiting factors to the creation of the
freeing environment for the individual” (Bozarth, 1998, p. 186). In retrospect, I, myself, was often concerned with the “correctness” of my “doing” the PCA, what the three attitudes are really about, and so forth. And this concern implied a different paradigm, positivism, I fell into, that sees genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and empathy at a technical level. Bozarth’s position echoes Rogers’ intuitive and spiritual tone (Raskin & Rogers, 1995) in Rogers’ late years. For example, his viewpoints of empathy (Rogers, 1975/1980, p. 142) and the way of being a group facilitator (Rogers, 1978, 1979/1980, p. 129) are entirely remote from positivism. One can experience the three attitudes toward people through his inner being. The externally visible and measurable behavior is not necessary and sufficient for a therapist to achieve the three attitudes.

**Discussion**

Ross and Nisbett (1991) supported the belief that collectivists assume social context to be crucial in human behavior. Different cultures are organized around a variety of deeply held ideologies and worldviews. In my own experience, partly because of having multicultural adventures in more than one nation, partly because of being a member of a collectivist culture, I am very aware of how the influence of a culture may pass to individuals. This can happen in such a way that elements of it remain strong and conflict with values and practices learned from another culture, even though a person feels she or he has successfully replaced or modified the originals.

It is harder for the PCA principles to be readily accepted in Taiwan than in the West. The people who have grown up in the unique culture here observe external rules and systems that they have been taught they ought to follow in their society. When they do not follow them, they experience severe pressure from the context. There are related obstacles. They do not have the basis of valuing individual accomplishment. They also carry a sense that the well-being of the whole will be threatened if they follow their own inner impulses.

Yet within collectivist Taiwanese culture the belief in a Buddha nature deeply resides in people’s hearts. Again, from my perspective, this religious interpretation from Taiwan is consistent with the fundamental hypothesis of the PCA about human nature, even though an “actualizing tendency” may conflict with external rules so valued in Taiwanese culture.

As a person-centered therapist in a collectivist culture, I found Rogers’ following explanation applies to cultural blocks when he describes layers of psychological defenses. Rogers (1961) states:

> The tendency may become deeply buried under layer after layer of encrusted psychological defenses; it may be hidden behind elaborate facades which deny its existence; but it is my belief that it exists in every individual, and awaits only the proper conditions to be released and expressed. (p. 35)

Just so, in Taiwan a person’s inner humanistic tendency has been fighting for a lifetime with fundamental internalized rules. The layers of cultural influence constitute very heavy blocks to the natural human tendency towards
self-actualization. Still, the PCA offers great help in this time of enormous cultural upheaval when there exists a common ground for the Buddha within and the actualizing tendency. At the level of philosophical assumption, I think the “Buddha nature” will be a bridge to the concept of the actualizing tendency. And it gives me hope at a concrete level when observing my two little girls. They often face the separation from their friends and miss them, but they are still able to happily live with parents enjoying their time and relationship with us. I see the “forward-moving directional tendency” (Rogers, 1961, p. 35) in them, before there is too much cultural influence around.

The goal, then, is to establish a nurturing climate that will make it possible for the natural actualizing tendency to find its way through the heavy blocks of contradictory cultural conditioning. Bozarth’s caution is important (1998); there is no strategy for “doing” the PCA. The assumptions about human nature, the Buddha within and the actualizing tendency, could be the common ground when the PCA meets the Taiwanese culture. I welcome the continued conversations about what it means to create a growth-promoting climate in multicultural settings, and about our practices of creating settings where people have a lived experience of the three attitudes of genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and empathy, including more reflection on the “inner Buddha nature.”

**Author’s note.**

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