EMERGENCE OF THEORY AND METHODOLOGY FOR A HUMAN SYSTEM MODEL OF POSITIVE HEALTH: AN INTERVIEW WITH JULES SEEMAN

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ABSTRACT. At the Annual Conference of the Association for the Development of the Person-Centered Approach in 1994, I asked Jules if I might interview him. As a member of a panel earlier in the day in which participants talked about client-centered theory early in its development, Jules spoke of a "lost piece" of his history early in the development of client-centered theory. Jules also talked about his theory, a human system model of positive health. Moreover, he described the basic methodology which therapists from this theoretical perspective might enter a client's "system" by making connection, and facilitating therapeutic growth through communication. My purpose in interviewing Jules is threefold. I would like others to hear Jules tell his story - that is, to tell how his ideas emerged, found a home in Rogerian theory, and continue to unfold. I would like to acknowledge the "lost piece" in Jules's history. And I hope to provide others with a narrative account of the development of client-centered (now person-centered) theory and how complementary person-centered theory is to human systems theory, for which Jules has not only a conceptual definition, but a methodology.

K: It's a privilege and an honor for me to be able to talk with you like this, Jules. We've both been traveling down the same path - looking for correspondences between person-centered theory and systems theory. Now that you are completing your human system model of psychotherapy, it seems like a fitting time to talk of these correspondences, and how you conceptualize them. Thank you, Jules, for sharing your ideas in this interview. (J: You're most welcome!)

In the panel this morning (at ADP-CA Annual Conference in 1994), you spoke about your childhood and the role your life history has played in the development of your philosophy and theory or model. I was intrigued. I wondered if we might start there... Would you talk about your "roots."

J: Sure, certainly. My origins, first. My parents came from Eastern Europe. They were living in a small community - anybody who saw "Fiddler on the Roof" would understand the origins of my parents, because they came from a stettl - it's hard to find on the map, a small

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town in Austria or Poland— it was one sometimes, and then another sometimes. My father came over in 1912 to find a way to make a living, and sent for my mother in 1914. He sent her money for passage and by the narrowest of margins, I am alive. My mother had to make a decision as to whether to wait for a little more money—she didn’t have enough to bring everything over—or whether to take a chance and go to the port. The point of that is that she got the last ship before World War I began. If she had not gotten that ship, she would not have been in the United States. I think she got pregnant the night she arrived in the United States, because she came in 1914 and I was born in April, 1915... it doesn’t take a lot of sustained arithmetic to figure that I was born nine months after she arrived! Well, I consider that that was a narrow escape!

Because my parents did not speak any English, they moved into a neighborhood which they thought would be congenial to them—an immigrant neighborhood—so my father could speak with the residents. He was a shoemaker. The neighborhood happened to be a very noxious place for my brothers and me because the kids were vitriently anti-Semitic... really physically anti-Semitic, so I learned danger in the environment very early, and that kept us close together as four inseparable boys. And that’s the way I grew up. We went to work very early because my father really didn’t make a living. We were four able-bodied boys and did what we could do.

K: Being of a minority made an imprint on you...

J: Yes, being in a minority made an imprint on me. Not only because I am Jewish, but because the particular neighborhood we lived in when I was young accentuated being of minority status... that is, I felt the danger. I grew up in rather fearful circumstances.

But living in the company of my brothers—that was very, very close—a real community. So close, in fact, that my parents in some sense receded somewhat into the background. I don’t know... My mother had a very important influence—she was a pacifist. But my experience of my parents on the whole is that they were very busy eking out a living. And that was okay, because my brothers were there. My brother Will was the oldest, followed by me, then Isadore and Melvin. We slept in one room; that’s all we had, just one room. And we had two beds, so we slept two to one bed: one person would put his head there, and I would put my feet there, and he would put his feet there, and I would put my head there where his feet were (both laughing), so we didn’t get too intimate, but that’s how we did it for years.

K: It’s pretty remarkable that four brothers could be so close that you could even call yourselves a small community...

J: Oh, yes, everybody called us the Seeman boys—they didn’t differentiate us—we were a collective in everyone’s eyes. We did things together like get to be extras at the opera. We got to love opera, and the way we could hear opera was to be an extra—a spear-carrier, or something like that in the opera, so we did that together, too. We also sneaked over or under the fence in the Army-Navy game together.

For education, we had to go to a place that didn’t cost money, so we went to what was called Maryland State Normal School. This was a three-year teacher’s college. That felt all right! Even then I liked the idea of teaching—it suited me—so that’s what I did when I grew up—I got a job teaching. What’s interesting about that is that I got my first teaching job in 1934, when I was still a teenager. I was nineteen when I got my first full-time teaching job, so I’ve been teaching since I was nineteen and haven’t ever stopped. I liked teaching in the
elementary school, and working with the kids was so much fun. I didn't mess around with a lot of homework and a lot of preparation. It was an easy job for me. I just related with the kids. Really, it was relationship.

I started in the elementary school, and in the first two years, I was the only man in the whole school—all the rest were women—so I felt a strange kind of isolation.

K: Another experience of being in a minority . . .

J: Yes. It didn't feel noxious, but it felt lonely. But being a minority by then was imprinted, and I think that's a very important part of me today—experiencing being a member of a minority.

I taught school, minded my own business and liked it. I figured I'd stay there, but in 1942, my future sister-in-law handed me a book and said, "You might like this, Jules." It was a book by someone unknown to me—someone named Carl Rogers—called Counseling and Psychotherapy. When I read it, it blew me away! I had never read such a book! It matched so much my inclinations.

K: Which were . . .

J: By then, over the years, I had become a confirmed pacifist. I was very anti-violence; I took a conscientious objector position during World War II, and never went into military service. When I read that book, it really awakened in me the possibility, the realization that there may be more to life than teaching. I already knew there was more to life than war.

K: You maintained a commitment to relationship, a positive commitment.

J: Yes, very much so. I enjoyed the teaching, so I decided to start graduate school. I did so, on a very small scale, at The University of Maryland, to see where this new inspiration might lead me. It was very good! The first class I took was so exciting! Nobody will believe that a class called "Educational Administration" could be so exciting! But the professor, Arnold Joyal, – oh! – was a wonderful, stimulating teacher, and he made it so exciting that I thought, "This is great!" When he offered me an assistantship, I quit my job of ten years. I think I could still go back to the very mailbox I put my letter of resignation in! It was so powerful to do this!

K: A big step!

J: Oh, yes! But I took it, and went and lived in College Park, Maryland for a year. Esther, my wife, and I had made a joint commitment by the end of that year. We wanted to go together for our doctorates, so we picked a few places where we would be willing to go. Ohio State was on our list, as well as Minnesota and a few others. We agreed that we would go wherever one of us got financed. So Esther got a very munificent scholarship—$375.00 for the year was what she got! And on the strength of that money we both quit and went to Minnesota. That was the total money that we had at that time.

K: A leap of faith!

J: Yes, and worth it! I'll tell you a funny little incident. Because I needed to go to work, I looked around. I looked into the Red Cross and this and that, but wasn't finding a job. And then I went over to the Associate Dean of the College of Education, which was where I was, by then, enrolled in Ed Psych. The Dean said, "Why don't you go over to the Laboratory School and speak to the principal? After all, you've got experience— he may need somebody." I
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thought, "What have I got to lose?" So I went over there, and he said, "You're hired!" The principal was Lester Anderson. He said, 'Let me tell you, Jules, the way it was over here. I was without a teacher, and the first day of school came and we had to just make do. My wife, Louise, got worried, and she said, "What are you going to do, Lester? You don't have a teacher!" And Lester said, "That's all right. The Lord will provide." And then the next week she was really jumpy with anxiety, and she said, "Lester, what are you going to do?" "Louise, the Lord will provide." So then when I came along, he said, "Louise, the Lord hath provided!"

K: That's wonderful!
J: I didn't know I was an emissary of the Lord!
K: Your life was really unfolding!
J: Yes. I started teaching at the University Laboratory School where they did demonstrations and research. But they also taught. Almost everybody teaching there was a graduate student. We had only four hours of work to do, which gave us the chance to do our graduate work. I taught for a year, and it was fun. The next year I got a full-time, 40-hour a week, job in the University Counseling Bureau. I was into client-centered therapy, but there was no way to pursue client-centered study at The University of Minnesota. The University of Minnesota had no client-centered resources. As a matter of fact, they were very, very anti-non-directive therapy, and I felt like I had to go underground to study what I wanted.

But I loved it because at the University Counseling Bureau there was a young man named Ray Bixler who had just gotten a Master's Degree having studied with Carl. He was hired by The University of Minnesota, and I was his colleague! He taught me non-directive counseling! The book had just come out, and he "taught it."

K: Serendipity!
J: Yes! It was wonderful because that was what I wanted to do, and that was what I did!
K: What in Carl Rogers's work attracted you in the first place?
J: It was an absolute match with my values of non-violence, non-coercion, equalitarian – it was made to order! It was right at the center of everything I believed in! I thought, "Here is actually a system of therapy that has worked that out, that honors, that even has a technology! My God!" It was just wonderment for me! This was such a break. We had gone to The University of Minnesota, where I knew I wasn't going to get the training I really wanted . . . but because that was the only place that we got this big $375.00 a year offer! Just couldn't turn that down! (both laugh) So, anyhow, I was there for two years while I was still doing graduate work, and Bix and I became such fast friends. He was so helpful.

Bix also modeled something very new to me. He modeled openness. I'd never lived in an atmosphere where people could get in touch with their insides. And share it, too. That wasn't the way we lived. It wasn't. But he did it! And I marveled at seeing someone so open. It obviously rubbed off for me because I could then get in touch with my own feelings, which was really quite new, unbelievable, coming from my childhood. I took to counseling, and I did my dissertation around the issue of client reactions to counseling. We did tape recording – that was very early, nobody was doing tape recording except Rogers. So that was interesting. I did a dissertation that I liked doing. It was really a very, very good experience – to research and write a dissertation I liked doing!

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K: To back up a bit. You described Bix as "open." Could you speak to that? Open in what sense?

J: It was clear that he could get in touch with his feelings and bring them out in a very natural way, that he could share intimately where some issues were for him, where the joys were. This was so new to me. People just didn't do that in my "circle" in my life. It was almost enchanting to hear someone who could do this . . . I feel and have always been what I call a "high contact" person, so I resonated to that kind of openness. It gave me a new idea about how one can relate to somebody and connect with somebody else. Bix was a good teacher, too. He supervised me without calling it supervision. We had a one-way vision mirror—and he helped me that way. And I took to it very readily. I was ready to do that as a counselor—we didn't call it "therapy" then.

K: Was it because you were a "high contact" person that you were drawn to counseling?

J: Oh, yes! In teaching, the greatest rewards for me were in getting to know the individual child. That was the fun. I didn't go in much for the cognitive stuff. I was mainly relating to the kids. I won a couple of prizes for photography! One of my kids looked like the main character in the book Penrod. I took his picture, and—there was Penrod! And there was a beautiful, young girl. I took a couple of candles to school and asked her to look up at them, and she looked, in the photograph, like a true madonna. That's what I really enjoyed—getting close to the children. So that's what I mean by "high contact."

K: I recall that sense of "high contact" from what you shared about you and your community of brothers.

J: Yes, that sense of relationship.

K: And then you carried that ever-developing ability with you . . .

J: Yes. That's what I mentioned in the panel today. I wrote one letter of application to work with Carl, and Bix got the job for me because he's the one who wrote the letter to Carl. Otherwise Carl would have had no way of knowing me. As a matter of fact, many years later, for my retirement party Carl wrote a letter. It's very precious to me. He said he was so glad he met me but he still did not understand, because I came from the "camp of the enemy!" And he said, " . . . but when you came down to interview, I found that I was willing to take a chance." But I was from the "camp of the enemy," which was the first time he ever said that!

K: Little did he know of the mini-community to which you belonged at Minnesota!

J: You bet! In his 1942 book he even wrote of "directive versus non-directive" and cites the Minnesota stuff as how not to do counseling!

K: Ironic! So you then got a position . . .

J: . . . at The University of Chicago. I got a position as an assistant professor in the Department of Human Development, and a job at the Counseling Center half-and-half. So it was half academic and half applied. That is, we worked with practicum students and with interns, and I was one of the staff persons from 1947 to 1953. In the middle of those six years, Carl got a large grant, thousands of dollars. We needed a Research Coordinator, and the way things happened there was that nobody was appointed, there were never any votes. But there it was. We needed a Research Coordinator.
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I felt Carl's eyes on me; I wanted to do it, though the work was both attractive and frightening. It was attractive because Minnesota's very strong research-oriented, and I love research. To me it was exciting, I had some ideas, so I said, "Okay, I'll be Research Coordinator! And I was, for the next two or three years. So there it was for me. It was a very significant experience, and, as a matter of fact, it was very important. Because what I did when I became research coordinator, was to take stock of where we were in research. I knew we had very good technology for studying therapy process—that is, through tape recordings. They were "wire recordings" then. Can you picture wire? It was so thin. But the material was not on tape, it was on wire, tiny, tiny, tiny, infinitesimally small. And the only problem was that once those wires slipped off the spool, they went around like the Sorcerer's Apprentice (both laughing), and would never stop. If you'd wait, it'd go all over the room! And the loss! You could never rewind them; it was a mess! I can still picture it! (both laughing)

K: Quite a responsibility!

J: Yes. As Research Coordinator the thing I felt responsible for was the part that I think we had not done. We were good at doing process research. But we had not gotten a handle on outcome research.

So what I saw was the need to look at the outcomes, the consequences of therapy in a way that was linked to the process. That is, theory-based outcomes. We didn't have anything like that. So I wrote this paper in 1951, "Conceptual Analysis of Client and Counselor Activity in Client-Centered Therapy." It was only recently that Fred Zimring said, "We ought to publish this as a historical kind of thing." So I said, "Go to it!" So it's now published. That's a long publication lag—from '51 to '94 - '43 years. I think it's a record! (both laughing) But that was a very important paper for me because it brought together my current understanding of client-centered therapy.

K: Could you specifically describe the process and what Rogers was looking for?

J: Well, before he started recorded therapy sessions, the whole notion of two people going into a room and having a therapy session had total mystery about it. Nobody had ever seen what actually happened in that room. And so Carl began recording. And the fascinating thing was the amount of work that it took to get an interview—it was remarkable the persistence. What he had to do was to have two simultaneous recorders. He used big 12" or 16" shellac, breakable records because tape recording had not come in. And each record held four minutes of counseling. He had to have dual machines so when one was finished, the other one had to go right on, and when that one was finished—four minutes—he had to go right on to the next one, and so he had ten of these big shellac records for each interview. By the time he did eight interviews, as he did with Herbert Bryan in Counseling and Psychotherapy, there were many, many breakable, stacked records. And, by the way, that was the first published transcribed tape in the world—that's real, recorded history. Each interview he had took about 12-14 records. Anyhow, he did it!

K: We think we have it hard—with audiotapes and videos . . . (J: Yeah, real hard!) (both laughing)

J: But then, what Carl said was, "Let's look at what the process of counseling is like. Now we've got it—verbatim! We've got everything, and we can look at it!" And the resources that were present had to do with levels of conceptualization. That, too, was primitive. They used categories like "statement of the problem," and "insight"—I mean, real gross kinds of things.
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There was very little personality theory, very little therapy theory in 1942. Carl had discovered something, namely, that if you listen to the client, that that’s better than interpretation for Carl than therapy that was really getting coercive. You know, “Think my way” had been and pretty much still was the implication of interpretations. That was Carl’s view.

Carl had caught on. He was influenced by Jessie Taft, who was a student of Otto Rank’s and heavily influenced by him. Jessie Taft wrote The Dynamics of Therapy. It was written in 1932 or 1933, ten years before Counseling and Psychotherapy. When you read it you’ll think you’re reading about client-centered therapy. It’s a great one.

K: That’s good to know. It gives some of the history behind Carl Rogers’s thought.

J: Yes, Jessie Taft came up and gave lectures and Carl was pretty impressed. But it filtered into Carl’s mind gradually. A lot of it, like reflection of feeling was his own “invention” but the idea was there in Jessie Taft’s work. I can’t say how much that influenced him. I know it did. Only Carl would know, and even he may not have known. But he did acknowledge Jessie Taft’s contributions, and that’s okay.

So it’s back to the process research. The theory became more enriched, as, for example, the concept of “self” became articulated. Vic Ramey had a lot to do with that. At Ohio State two or three years after Carl began, Vic Ramey and he began to track changes in the concept of self. That was the first study ever done in changes in concept of self. And Vic Ramey did that because he had the recordings. Elizabeth Shearer looked at a very fascinating issue early on in process research, and that is, attitudes towards self, attitudes towards others. She found an almost straight line relationship: as persons got more acquainted with and accepting of self, they showed more acceptance of others. And it just went in a straight line. That’s what I mean by process research. But we had no outcome research!

K: What were their concepts of “self”? Did they distinguish between self and self-concept?

J: No, I think they used conceptions of self and self-reference as essentially referring to the same thing: notions persons had about themselves, self-definition.

K: And your role in developing this line of thought had to do with self or self-reference in the therapeutic process and resultant outcome . . .

J: Yes, when I wrote this paper. I wanted to formulate a way of thinking that would help us build outcome research. I took the abstract concept of self-actualization and defined it. I had never been comfortable or satisfied with the concept of self-actualization—it seemed so abstract. I said we could think of self-actualization as organismic process. That is, there is an organismic lawfulness, a regularity in organismic pattern that we call self-actualization. I observed that psychotherapy involves this kind of thing; that when we get a disturbance in organismic lawfulness, there’s intrapsychic disturbance. So psychotherapy helps, you might say, “unknot” the dysfunction and come back to organic order, or integration. That was my key statement in 1951—that psychotherapy brings the person to organic order or integration.

There were other things in that paper. I described the process of therapy as involving what I called experiencing with meaning. That is, when we make a connection with the person’s organismic, precognitive self, the person is able to get hold of and master chaotic, inchoate feelings by symbolizing them, bringing them out, looking at them, experiencing them. They then can begin to have some name for their experiencing—that’s where meaning comes in. So “experiencing with meaning” to me, I said, was the heart of psychotherapy. And I gave
an example—this was from a work by Carson McCullers, the novelist, "The mind is like a richly woven tapestry in which the colors are distilled from the experience of the senses, and the design drawn by the convolutions of the intellect." She saw the "experiencing with meaning"—the color, the senses, distilled from the experience of the senses, and the design. The form, brought out by the convolutions of the intellect. Unknowingly, she was describing the FC blend of form and color on the Rorschach. She didn't know it; she wasn't studying Rorschach, but her artistic, intuitive sense got it. I looked at that and I said, "That is the Rorschach." So I went back and studied the Rorschach. did some research, and found that the FC response was what changed most in therapy—that there was an impoverished FC response before therapy and enriched response after therapy. And also that FC response was described by Sam Beck, who was at The University of Chicago—I had a chance to check it with him—as the response most indicative of emotional maturity.

So there Carson McCullers was, and there I was, "experiencing with meaning"—the whole thing fit together!

K: Synchronicity!

J: Exactly!

K: A person finds the symbols, the words to describe the self, and...

J: ...yes, the process studies, and then we would go more for something that had to do with the "self" in the outcomes. So that we knew, then, even if we used Rorschach, we knew what to look for that would define psychotherapy similarly. There were other things, for example, Shearer's acceptance of self and acceptance of others. We used the TAT—the stories in the Thematic Apperception Test—but instead of using them in the original way, we studied the extent to which acceptance of self and acceptance of others came through in their stories. We began to look for themes reflected in the theory that were proposing. We looked, for instance, at the extent to which the person referred to relationships. Another thing we looked at was—this was so simple—we looked at prepositions that would be used, like "against," "under," "over," "toward," "with," "for,"—they were very different in their impact. So we defined relationships by using prepositions, and we found that well-integrated persons used more "toward," "with," and "for." They rarely used "over," and "under,"—hierarchical terms.

K: What led you to looking at prepositions as clues?

J: A number of things, I suppose. Karen Horney used prepositions in her descriptions. Sylvan Thompkins, the Thematic Apperception Test used them, so it occurred to us that prepositions were relational—in fact, the definition of a preposition is that it is a relational term! That's the definition of a preposition! (both laugh)

Carl then got very imbued with Q sorts of the self-concept—before and after therapy—you see how that's theory-based. And then I worked on the Counselor Judgment Scale—the scale that the counselor could give us as their evaluation of the client and the items on that Counselor Judgment Scale matched the theory. So that's how we began to do the theory-based outcome research!

K: From your separate perspectives, you were all directed towards a common objective, validating the theory.
J: Yes, and that was a major development in our work, because we had never done outcome; we had done process, but this time we did it in outcome. And the first glimmerings of that are in the 1954 Volume that summarizes the research that Rogers and Diamond had done. In retrospect, I have some bad feeling about part of that book, and I'll tell you what it is. I didn't think about this until many years later.

I was Research Coordinator until I left in 1953 to take a job in Nashville. Rosalind Diamond took over my position as Research Coordinator. And when it came to writing up the material, they seemed to have forgotten that I had originally been Research Coordinator, so I was never invited to participate in writing it up. And the strange thing was that our community was not hierarchical. I didn't experience competitiveness, so it seemed implicit, like "that was just the way it was." I was no longer there, so people who were there, did it. But many years later, what I began to feel was, was not resentment, but sadness that this part of my experience got lost. I was Research Coordinator, and I did have a lot to do with the shape of the project—not everything, by any means, but that's nowhere in my history.

K: It was a painful oversight.

J: Oh, yes, I felt like there was a loss in my history there. And I didn't feel it until many years later! But one of my colleagues was sore as hell because I was not a co-author. I had heard him say that, but it didn't register until much, much later.

K: Perhaps you are such a "high contact" person that it wouldn't occur to you that you would not be "contacted," in other words, included.

J: Yeah, when I was looking at my own history in retrospect and realizing there was a gap in terms of speaking of my experience or representing a photograph of my history, there was a blank in a very significant personal and professional episode in the "story" of my life.

K: I think that's a gap, a blank to fill in. How many of us have known how closely you worked with Carl Rogers and the genesis of your model of the human system model until you began to speak of it.

J: That's right, there would be no way for you to know that because it isn't in the "record."

K: Right, right, and that brought up sadness in you.

J: It did, it did. And I really still feel a sense of loss about that because there's been an empty space in my life story which was really very rich, very important to me.

K: At that point, then you were no longer with the group of people who were working together — you had gone elsewhere . . .

J: . . . to the George Peabody College, and I was asked to be Director of the program in Counseling Psychology there. Subsequently, we started a clinical program which became accredited, and I was Director of both the counseling and clinical programs. But to answer your question more directly, yes, I was out of the loop because my colleagues were scattering. A lot of them were still there, but others went on their way to different places, different colleges, universities — most of them have done that. Nat Raskin, Fred Zimring, John Shlein were all in academic life.

K: Were they all there?
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J: Yes, they were all there. Fred Zimring came just about the time I was leaving. Gene Gendlin, who is still teaching at The University of Chicago. Laura Rice went to York University. The sadness is that we don't have a new generation doing that, this sort of community of thought and research.

K: ... which was a feeling I picked up from the panel discussion this morning. Did client-centered theory continue, though, to guide your practice?

J: Yes, what happened was that from that very first paper, I talked about the concept of returning to organic order or integration. That is to say, this paper was not so much a therapy paper. It was really a personality theory paper, because I was conceptualizing where the process went in terms of the person—that is, organic order or integration. Carl's paper of 1953, "The Fully Functioning Person was influential in my thinking. What I couldn't do was therapy research, because I didn't have a community doing that any longer.

K: Did that stymie you?

J: No, because what I started to do was to develop a conceptualization of personality. I took the words "organic order" and "integration" and gave them a little "blip," calling them organismic integration. That became the core of my research and scholarly interests: How do we look at the fully functioning person or personality integration? That was really what compelled me.

K: And carried you into a new phase...

J: Yes, the next milestone in my "history" was when I got to Peabody. I began evolving a more clearly defined concept of organismic integration. In 1959 I published a paper called, "Toward a Concept of Personality Integration." I was very pleased: it was published in The American Psychologist, which is the best place to get the word out. That paper was one of the two most important papers I have ever written, because it defined my research program. I could do my research in personality! I didn't have to do research in psychotherapy! That one paper produced twenty-five studies of personality integration which I did with my students. It was really, to me, a seminal paper. It defined my research program while I was at Peabody. I didn't know it was going to do that! In fact, as far as I'm concerned, everything that I have done grew out of what was going on, what I had been doing. It grew organically, too, and by 1979, I was ready to pull all these together and put them in a book.

It's funny. A person can feel whether she or he is ready, but I swear, it's like being pregnant. I was ready to deliver! Really, it's an analogy. And why 1979? Because I got a sabbatical semester and could take full time to do this. So I set up a ritual where, after breakfast I put on a long-play record of "Il Trovatore"—it's one of my favorite operas—get my work out, and start writing on the book. I did that every day for a semester. I think that record is worn out, but it was an inspiration! It was fun! I got coffee and orange juice, and just settled down and wrote until noon, and then I could let go the rest of the day. I felt very satisfied about working on the book. I finished the book, then looked for a publisher, and finally got one—Human Sciences Press. The book came out in 1983. Guthrie Ford bought a copy. He just told me that this morning!

K: Is that Personality Integration...
J: *Personality Integration: Studies and Reflections.* That's the book. After that book I felt that in a way my scholarly life was finished. But, no, that's part of this planlessness. I didn't have any idea where I was going next, but at some point I got the insight that what I was talking about was positive health. I did not loop any of this as consequences of psychotherapy. But then I saw that what I was talking about—I mean all these criteria of the fully functioning person was a definition of positive health. So I turned my stuff around and used that concept. I began looking at health literature.

K: Mental health?

J: No, just "health." Not mental health.

K: Holistically.

J: Exactly. Organismic, total. And what I consider as the next important paper I've written came in 1989 - "Toward a Model of Positive Health." That paper bounced around for a couple of years before I got it published. The first time I sent it, I sent it to The American Psychologist, and they said, "No thanks!" I mean, it was a flat turn down. So I put it away. But I couldn't keep it put away. It was there. And I said to myself that I would look at it, amplify it. They didn't give me too much feedback, but a little, enough to get hold of something. So I kept working on it, revising it, reworking it, and a year later I sent it back, and they had a different response, which was, "We think you've got something here, but there's also some stuff you don't have." So they gave me some feedback, and also some encouragement. So I grabbed that. I rewrote whatever I felt I could, and I also declined to change some things and told them why—because in my judgment they belonged in the paper. They were very good about that. And they published it. So "Toward a Model of Positive Health" was published in 1989.

Meanwhile, I was an associate editor of *The Person-Centered Review,* and was writing papers—I guess I wrote four or five papers for the *Review.* What eventually developed—not planfully, but naturally—was that one day I said, "Wait a minute!" I read my paper, "Toward a Model of Positive Health," and I said, "If I'm talking about positive health, and it points toward a process that helps us attain positive health—that is, psychotherapy!" So, I was back to psychotherapy. By then I was thoroughly engaged in using a human systems model which I explicated pretty clearly in "Toward a Model of Positive Health."

K: How did systems theory enter your thinking?

J: I don't really know!

K: That's interesting, isn't it?

J: Yes, it is. I said to a friend, it just became obvious what I was doing! So that describes it—I was using it, and it became obvious. It emerged. And once it emerged, it was socko! That is, by God, yes! It was such a useful framework. At first it didn't even occur to me that I could write about psychotherapy, though I had begun writing glimmerings about psychotherapy without knowing it. I didn't have it fully conceptualized in my mind, though.

I wrote a paragraph—the one I read this morning—about entering the human system as a psychotherapist, entering it at many points. But that was the only thing I wrote. Eventually it became obvious that here was a model of psychotherapy that was encompassing that had to do with the human system. And I'm still writing.
K: Building on the history of your life and thought, do you feel now, as you're continuing to write, that your thoughts are going to continue to clarify, to emerge?

J: Yes, I don't have anything in my mind "next." I never do. Right now I'm very clear that I have articulated, I haven't quite finished the paper, but that I've articulated a human systems model of psychotherapy.

K: That's exciting! People have talked about systems theory in different ways--group as a whole systems theory, theory of living systems, for instance. How do you see the human? Big question!

J: I think the best starting point here is with Andras Angyal, who, in 1940, had come across an idea from a European theorist, a biologically-oriented theorist, who defined systems very simply and very elegantly with these two words: *unitas multiplex*--that is what a system is. That is to say, a system is all of a piece, with multiple components. That's what "unitas" is. No element functions independently. They are so intertwined that in fact the very definition of the subsystem has to be contextual. It is not isolated. Nothing in the human system is isolated, so you can look at the multiplex, what I have defined, the behavioral subsystems--I've done that in just a simple molecular to molar kind of way, starting at the biochemical and going to the physiological, the perceptual, then to the cognitive.

But I added one recently. One of my students, Bob Brown, challenged me on something, got my feet to the fire, and said, "Look, Jules, you're making a mistake here. Something is missing." And I agreed with him. He said, "There's a whole precognitive area that's essential for psychotherapy. You've got to have a precognitive component, Jules. But not just as a precursor that will soon work up to the cognitive. That wouldn't be doing justice to all of the unformed information we have throughout our bodies." So I used the concept "pre-cognitive" and explained that it didn't necessarily have to go up to cognitive or that cognitive was something kind of superior. It wasn't. The result is a model that incorporates the precognitive and cognitive and two "ecological" levels of process -- intrapersonal and interpersonal ecology. The human system is all of a piece, then.

To explain this a bit further: the human system's characterized by two simple components. There's *connectedness* -- for instance, on the biological level, our cells inform each other--if they didn't they would die. Rossi wrote a beautiful paper on the connector, the mind-body connector--what he called a "transducer." The transducer is the hypothalamus. It goes from biochemistry to physiology to the nervous system. By the way, mind-body terminology is arbitrary. We need it for convenience in talking about the organism. We call cognition "mind" but cognition can't function without the endocrine system. The endocrine system must be involved in cognition, because it feeds other components. So if you want to call it "mind" call it "mind," but it's important to remember that mind is intertwined with body; they are not separate.

Okay. So that's the human system. The connectedness is what I call the *structure*. It's the way we're built. The second component has to do with *communication*, or what I call *process*. We have internal communication; that's where intuition, for instance, comes in. And we have interpersonal communication. The important thing is that *it takes communication to keep our organism alive and in good working order*. Communication is interrupted in a hundred different ways. Anxiety interrupts communication in the person. Ambivalence is a great interrupter of communication. The person caught in the grip of two things at once is immobilized, with thoughts going 'round and 'round and 'round and 'round,
never going anywhere because of the confusion. That being the case, psychotherapy has to be involved with both connection and communication. Those are the two basic components.

K: And how do structure and process, connection and communication work in therapy?

J: Well, if you're a therapist and I'm a client, you can't help me at all until you connect with me. Until you have entered my system in some way. You can enter my system in a lot of different ways. You don't have to enter it verbally. That's the convention, but it's not the only way. Natalie Rogers doesn't enter it verbally. She enters it biologically - with dance, for example. Gendlin enters it with a combination of biology and cognition, "focusing." They know that there are many ways for therapists to enter the human system. There's a wonderful book by Keppner, who writes from a Gestalt perspective. He shows how communication in the body system is decisive in psychotherapy. So the human system model of psychotherapy speaks to how to enhance connection and communication. That's what it does. That's all it does.

As an example, a client of mine said, "When I hear a 'should,' I can't hear anything else." There's an incredibly clear example of disruption in communication. "I can't hear anything else," he says. What does that mean? It means his communication is disrupted and he has dysfunction there. And I don't mean psychopathology. When I use dysfunction, I mean exactly that - that systemic function has somehow been disturbed or interrupted. The dysfunction gets in his way and interrupts him. My task is to enhance the flow of communication.

K: Habitual attentional strategies that we may use build up, block up communication. Either within the person or between persons.

J: That's it. That's exactly it. And then therapy might be relaxation ...

K: Open focus ...

J: Right! It might be any of several entries into the human system. And the reason it sometimes, in a sense, doesn't matter which subsystem serves as the entry point is that once you enter my system, our connectedness will suffice that entry point. It doesn't get stuck at that entry point. Of course, you need the skill to know how to help me suffice that information or that entry point, that connection. You can enter at my toes. You can enter it in movement.

I think one reason that Gendlin's theory and the practice of focusing is often helpful to people is that it's a 'natural' at times. If a person is organismically "in touch," connection can be established and communication can be facilitated. Sometimes it may need to be actively facilitated. The client I just mentioned was not in touch, but I could help him get in touch. I think of it as a small miracle that his body could give him that information ... I couldn't ... he couldn't, with his head. That illustrates how the human system can function in harmony to enhance the free-flow of communication. That was what was happening.

K: It wasn't happening within him; he wasn't able to open intrapersonally by himself, so interpersonally ...

J: Interpersonally it was facilitated. Right. And it was facilitated at an appropriate moment. He was stuck. The person's stuckness is a living thing, by the way. It's energy, and it's livingness. So why should I feel stuck? There's stuckness. There's joy. There's sorrow. There's stuckness. So why should stuckness stop me if joy, if sorrow, if anxiety don't?

K: I feel embarrassed to say this, but I admit I had never thought of it like that. It's very helpful.
An Interview with Jules Seeman

J: I know, but a lot of therapists stop and say, “Whoops, I’m stuck, too! Oh what can I do? How can I rescue this person?” (both laugh.) And there’s no need!

K: I had an experience during a group earlier that illustrates this, I think. The group was talking on an intellectual level. I’m not sure I was bored, but my attention was literally off in the trees. Then I got this information from my body – my hands got wet, my heart started pounding. I know enough now that if those things are going on in me, I’d better say something! (Jules laughs.) Because that’s a way for me to get unstuck.

J: Exactly! That was quite a message, wasn’t it?

K: Yeah! Yeah! Jules, there are a couple of questions I’d like to ask you. (Jules: Sure . . .)

One has to do with autonomy and attachment and their relationship with connectedness. Autonomy and attachment have to do with both intrapersonal and interpersonal systems. They seem to be “linchpins” in your model. So, first, how do you see the relationship between autonomy/attachment and connectedness?

J: Autonomy and attachment may be emphasized as intrapersonal or interpersonal systems, but I think they’re both. both. If I’m going to define autonomy in a full sense, I have to take account of self in relationship, because it’s the wholeness of self in relation to his or her world that matters – a person is not whole in a vacuum. So the wholeness of self, the capacity for action, for thought, for movement as self in relationship we can define as autonomy.

K: And how does attachment relate to connectedness? It seems to follow from what you’ve said that context – and human connection within context – is an essential aspect of the human systems model.

J: It’s necessary. It’s part of the definition. Without it you have a limping definition! If you want a limping definition, there you are! Any time you start disconnecting the organism from context, from the interpersonal, you may have a limping definition! How about that! (both laugh) Incredible!

Okay, attachment to me, represents orientation of self within as need for other. Attachment represents a need for other as part of wholeness. It isn’t a bad thing . . . without attachment, I think we’d be so isolated . . . It’s just that attachment interferes with the person’s full flow of energy and development if the person is fixed on the need for dependence. If it deprives the person of forward, forward moving energy, then it becomes a dysfunction because it represents an interference with free-flowing connection and communication and with self, with fulfillment of self. The person’s stuck in it beyond a certain level of attachment. It seems to me that the human needs the dialectic between autonomy and attachment to be complete. Over-attachment is non-autonomy. The capacity to function fully as self in relationship and still doing what a person needs to do without being immobilized by attachment. It seems to me the fully-functioning person has found a balance between autonomy and attachment.

K: That’s a wonderful synthesis! (pause)

Another question! What is intuition, and what role does it play in the human system?

J: I think the term intuition has a certain amount of vagueness about it. It’s used in different ways. Actually, vagueness is part of the definition of intuition. For example, when I hear someone say, “I have an intuitive feel . . .” to me what they’re saying is, “I have some
precognitive information in my body, in my organism. It's not magic, it's not some mysterious essence. It's simply not cognitive. It's precognitive. And the "vibes" prompt action, because they are information. Where is it written that all of the information has to be up in the cortex?

K: And what about emotions? "Where" are they?

J: In the subsystems. Every one of them. Affect has a physiological dimension, a biochemical, hormonal dimension that expresses activity, excitement. It may be prompted by an interpersonal situation or it may be prompted by a thought, but all the subsystems are involved in affect. That's why I don't have a separate category for it. But it's there! (K: Yes!) The physiological, the perceptual, the cognitive...each subsystem is working, but the information may come through most strongly in one or another of the subsystems. For example, your cognitive process may symbolize "danger," or "fright"—"This is something to be afraid of"—and the rest of your body goes into action. Your biochemistry starts going...click!

K: Great! (pause)

Final questions! Do you think the three Rogerian conditions are necessary and sufficient? Do you use them intentionally? And are they part of your organismic "working-with-self-and-with-others"?

J: I think they're in my bones. I don't think about them, but I act in terms of them. Now whether they're necessary and sufficient I wouldn't hold one way or the other. I have some doubt that they are sufficient. I think people are too complex and too different—I think of a dissociated person, I think of a paranoid person, I think of a phobic person—such people may need some other intervention. And then again they may not. So I don't know about whether they are sufficient. I think they are very important. I think they are so fundamental that I'm glad Carl identified them. I think congruence is one of the absolutes. I have to be a together person to be able to function. I find more and more that for me I need to have my own signals at my disposal to use in psychotherapy. When I come up against a tough situation, if I don't have firm guidelines, if I don't have a precedent, and the person is in real trouble, then I am the instrument, and I have to be congruent to work effectively to stay in touch with that person. And there are people who don't respond to the traditional concept of client-centered—now person-centered—therapy, the kind of interaction that we understand. Of course, keep in mind that those three conditions don't specify any technology. Empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence don't specify a technology.

K: And they may be "picked up" verbally and nonverbally. You can be upset with someone and express it firmly and kindly.

J: Yes. I need to do it responsibly, therapeutically. I can't indulge myself. I think it would be unethical for me to indulge and just "get mad." If I'm going to express that anger, I have to be clear that it's a responsible part of the therapeutic process. Otherwise, it's my problem. I don't want to unload on the client. The client has enough trouble without being burdened. If it isn't therapeutic, it doesn't belong. Congruence doesn't mean "spouting," it means being in touch and acting responsibly on it. That's very important. Some people think "anything goes"—if you're spontaneous, okay. I think that's just unethical. But some people think that, and they can be very destructive.
K: That sort of spontaneity could be destructive in our everyday lives as well. (Jules: Right, right.)

Jules, we've covered a lot of ground as you've traced the history of your life and thought. Community, emergent thought, openness, human systems, connection, and communication stand out to me as I think of all you've shared. What a gift to the field of counseling and psychotherapy! To know how you conceptualize personality integration and the human system and how your thoughts have developed in your experiencing through your life. Thank you so much. It has been both an honor and pleasure speaking with you.

J: You're most welcome. And thank you for the opportunity to "tell my story." The honor and pleasure have been mine!
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