

*"The Person-Centered approach, then is primarily a way of being which finds its expression in attitudes and behaviors that create a growth-promoting climate."*

Carl R. Rogers

## Group Participant Intent at a Person-Centered Workshop

Jo Cohen, Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA

with

Carole Anne Wilkes, New Horizons Recovery Center, Huntsville, AL

### BACKGROUND

Each February since 1986, the Person-Centered Studies Project under the direction of Jerold Bozarth at the University of Georgia has hosted an experiential person-centered group workshop promoted primarily to people in helping professions, to trainees of the helping professions, and to people identified with various person-centered organizations. The workshop has evolved from a four day (1986-1993) to a week-long (1994; 1995) event, with numbers of participants varying over the years from about 45 to 100. In its early years, several veterans of the person-centered approach (PCA) were listed on the flyer as conference staff. For the past several years, no staff have been identified.

### RATIONALE

The present report is based upon the second-to-last, Saturday evening group meeting of February 19, 1994, scheduled from 9:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. (though the group had agreed to begin the meeting at 8:00 rather than 9:00); and attended by approximately 45 individuals. For this particular session, a "Community Group" was scheduled in the workshop brochure. The workshop was itself entitled "Organizational, Family, and Societal Harmony through Personal Empowerment." The research upon which this report is based was inspired by John Wood's presentation on the need to evaluate effective variables in person-centered group (and individual) therapy given earlier in the week. Both authors of this paper were in attendance at the workshop, and together conceived of the project and collected the data. Jo Cohen analyzed the data and wrote the report, and Carole Anne provided feedback and support toward the end of the writing.

### METHODS

At the group meetings' outset, the participant researchers handed out a blank piece of paper and pens to all attendees, requesting that they write their intention for the group that night. Participants were asked to hold onto their papers until the end of the meeting. This instruction was also listed on a

chalkboard. No other direction was given at this time. A few late-comers were privately requested to do the same. At approximately 9:45 p.m., when members began to leave, the researchers got the attention of the group members, and requested that on their way out they complete additional questions written on a sheet of paper and placed on a table situated toward the group room doorway. Three questions were asked: 1) Please rate the extent to which your intention was met on a scale from 1 = Not At All to 7 = Completely; 2) To the extent that your intention was not met, Why Not?; 3) To the extent that your intention was met—How?

Thirty-two group attendees participated. No demographic characteristics of the sample were assessed, however, the group was comprised of predominantly helping professionals of varying ages (including academicians and those in training programs), with varying years of work experience, and with varying degrees of commitment to the person-centered approach (PCA). Many had attended similar workshops; probably more than half had previously attended a Warm Springs workshop. The group was predominantly, but not exclusively comprised of Caucasian, United States citizens, and was nearly equally distributed in terms of gender.

### RESPONSE SCORING

Responses to all questions (except the numerical rating of meeting one's intent) were evaluated by first listing all response statements, and by then observing them for themes. Eight categories were thusly established for intent; four for why the intention was not met, and four for how the intention was met. In addition, intentions were also categorized into three groups, not merely by collapsing the eight categories into three, but with some intentions belonging to one of the eight groupings being classed into two or three different classes in the (perhaps higher order) second intention factor. Results are primarily descriptive, though some inferential results are reported in the spirit of suggesting possible future lines of inquiry.

*(continued on page 2)*

## Group Participant Intent continued

### RESULTS

The first table shows the intentions of participants based on the eight factor classification. Fifteen of the 32 participants listed a second intention, which appears as a "Second Intent" under the number of respondents column. Not listed is the fact that two of the 32 respondents listed a third intent. In both cases the third intention could be classified under category two—involving some type of provocation.

TABLE 1. CLASSIFICATION OF PARTICIPANTS' INTENTIONS

CATEGORIES OF INTENTION	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	
	FIRST INTENT	SECOND INTENT
1 No Intention	5	0
2 Involves some type of provocation (e.g., "to energize the group," "to provoke exhilaration," "fireworks.")	4	0
3 Involves not being alone; and meeting new people	3	1
4 Involves listening, openness to whatever occurs, speaking "when moved to do so"	3	4
5 Involves feeling connected with the group, sharing, giving and receiving	5	2
6 Involves being with friends, being with the community	7	1
7 Involves starting the closure process	3	3
8 Involves obligation to the group	2	2
9 Idiosyncratic response (e.g., "to feel aloneness")	2	0

In Table two, the second classification system of participant intention is presented.

TABLE 2. SECOND MODEL CLASSIFYING PARTICIPANTS' INTENTIONS

CATEGORIES OF INTENTION	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
1 Receptiveness, openness, self exploration	4
2 Expectation of particular goal (e.g., "to share with or meet new people;" "to feel a connection")	14
3 Little or no particular intention (e.g., "to be with people;" "because it's the last night.")	14

Next, eighteen people completed the numerical rating of the extent to which their intention was met. The mean rating, from 1 = Not At All, to 7 = Completely, was 5.0. Using the second order classification system (See Table 2), the mean ratings of intention being met were calculated. For the three individuals with a predominantly *receptive intention* (total  $n = 4$ ; 1 missing data), the mean rating was 6.0. For the 10 who expressed a *goal oriented intention* ( $n = 14$ ; 4 missing data), the mean rating was 4.1. And for the five who expressed *no intention- or intention with little specificity* ( $n = 14$ ; 9 missing data), the mean rating was 6.2). It might have indeed been

expected that less specific intentions or more receptive intentions would yield higher intention-satisfaction ratings than would intentions with specific goals. Overall satisfaction with the group, however, should not be inferred as being higher for those with less specific goals based on these results.

It is of additional interest that of the 18 who rated the extent to which their intention was met, all four of those whose primary intention involved some type of provocation rated the extent to which their intention was met as relatively low (Rating = 2 ( $n = 2$ ); Rating = 3 ( $n = 1$ ); Rating = 4 ( $n = 1$ ) in comparison with the other respondents. For instance, where primary intent was openness, ratings were 6 ( $n = 1$ ) and 7 ( $n = 2$ ); where primary intent was to be with friends/community, ratings were 5 ( $n = 2$ ) and 7 ( $n = 1$ ); and where primary intent involved not being alone/meeting new people, ratings were 5, 6, and 7 ( $n = 1$  for each rating). More mixed ratings were reported for the intention of feeling connected (one "3" and one "6" rating), and for starting the closure process (ratings included a "3," a "5," and a "7").

Nine participants listed a reason as to how their intention was met, and seven provided reasons as to why their intention was not met. Three people in this subsample overlap the two responses, while 13 gave a response to only one of the two questions. Table 3 shows data for the nine individuals who reported how their intention was met. Ratings for the meeting of intentions in this group ranged from three to seven, with a mean of 6.1.

TABLE 3. CATEGORIES OF HOW ONE'S INTENTION WAS MET

HOW INTENTION WAS MET	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
1 Low Expectation	1
2 Something meaningful happened in group	2
3 I did something (e.g., took a risk)	4
4 Interaction; physical proximity	2

In Table 4, data for the seven individuals who report why their intention was not met are presented. It is notable that the four individuals reporting a "provocative" primary intent reported four different reasons as to why their intent was not met.

TABLE 4. CATEGORIES OF WHY ONE'S INTENTION WAS NOT MET

WHY INTENTION WAS NOT MET	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
1 Group was too emotional	1
2 Group was boring	1
3 My intention changed, or, did not focus on intent	2
4 I was not open, tolerant, or connected enough	3

### INTEGRATION OF RESULTS INTO EXISTING BODY OF LITERATURE

I will briefly summarize how the results of this pilot project might be understood in light of some person-centered large group theory literature.

(continued on page 3)

## The Relationship's The Thing

by Peggy Natiello

with the Center for Interpersonal Growth, Inc.

"It's the relationship that heals, the relationship that heals, the relationship that heals — my professional rosary", says Irv Yalom, M.D. in *Love's Executioner* (1989, p.91).

More than 30 years of clinical outcome research is documenting the finding that the positive results of effective psychotherapy are in direct proportion to the quality of the relationship. Theories and techniques of psychotherapy, it seems, must take a back seat to the authentic connectedness that develops between client and therapist. Lambert (1986) states that: "...at least from the patient's point of view, effective treatment is due to factors associated with relationship variables and the personal qualities of the therapist" (p.189).

The personal qualities that clients identify as facilitative in these research studies are strikingly similar no matter what therapeutic system is under scrutiny. Consistently, the core conditions of client-centered therapy identified by Carl R. Rogers, Ph.D. surface in the research.

For example, in an overview of clinical outcome research Miller, et.al. (1995) conclude that clients' "...participation

is, of course, largely a result of the bond or alliance that clients form with the helping professional...A positive bond or alliance results, at least in part, when the therapist is empathic, genuine and respectful — when he or she exhibits the relationship factors that humanistic psychotherapist Carl Rogers considered the 'core conditions' of effective psychotherapy" (p.56). Patterson (1989), looking for common factors in eclectic psychotherapy, proposes that: "Three of these common elements are empathic understanding, respect or warmth, and therapeutic genuineness. They are the core or essence of client-centered therapy..." (p.427).

In addition to these therapist-offered conditions, the research further demonstrates that attributes of the clients themselves — their capacity for participating in a relationship, their readiness for change, their life circumstances — play the most significant part in determining the outcome of psychotherapy. It can be humbling indeed for therapists to realize that it is our *clients'* work that brings about change, rather than our *own* interventions. We practice in a competitive

(continued on page 5)

### A Study of Facilitation continued

In 1988 Bozarth suggested five manifestations of successful leaders. Leaders (facilitators), he said,

- (1) trust "group wisdom" as well as individual wisdom;
- (2) become participants in the group as well as facilitators;
- (3) trust the inherent therapeutic potential of all members, realizing that any particular person may be more therapeutic with any particular group member than any of the facilitators;
- (4) combine the spontaneous, genuine responsiveness with their desire and efforts to understand; and
- (5) relinquish control of outcome, direction, or mood.

(1995, p.1)

Based on his experiences in community meetings, he says he has come to feel that "...the presence or absence of particular individuals [including facilitators] are of little relevance."

The genesis of Bozarth's theoretical stance regarding facilitation is informative and intriguing, and in general articulates my concept of facilitation. Unlike Bozarth,

however, I believe that some form of facilitation may be important to some individuals, sometimes. I am concerned about the number of participants of any regularly held person-centered gathering who don't return — and many don't. (How many participants don't return because of location of the next Annual Meeting may be a factor; this is an unknown, and one which I think bears following up.) Offering information and being willing to *risk communicating* the genuineness, empathy, and unconditional positive regard — which can feel extraordinarily difficult — might make person-centered groups more friendly — particularly to newcomers for whom the initial formlessness of the group can be intimidating and cause excessive self-doubt ("Is there a secret here that I'm supposed to get?").

Brodley's one-page description of the person-centered approach and what participants might expect in the large person-centered community groups, which was available upon arrival at the 1993 Annual Conference, was wonderfully succinct and informative. Had this been my first experience of a person-centered group, and I read that, I would have felt reassured *because I was provided with some information*. I also think it might help us *develop* to consider how other theories might inform us as we gather in large person-centered community groups.

(continued on page 4)

## *A Study of Facilitation continued*

### CONCLUSIONS

Observations of responses in this study suggest that by expressing and modeling the three conditions, the facilitators and members are doing what is necessary. The intense dialogue in a presentation on the *development* of the person-centered approach at the 1995 Annual ADP-CA Conference validated, for me, the viability and desirability of researching issues associated with the large person-centered community groups. It was extraordinarily revitalizing to hear Carol Wolter-Gustafson clearly, boldly, and with passionate accuracy express what many of us know — consistently manifesting person-centered conditions is anything but easy, and living the conditions in a large person-centered group can be extraordinarily challenging. **And we are up to the task.**

Empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness are gifts we may offer. It is up to us as person-centered persons and as professionals, to continue to refine our articulations of the person-centered approach and key issues such as facilitation in large person-centered groups. We can continue to move purposefully back into the area of research and present our person-centered findings and experiences to others of different theoretical orientations. I have no doubt that if we do, the person-centered approach, in general, and the large person-centered community groups, in particular, will be increasingly validated and valued.

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### *The Relationship's The Thing continued*

field where expertness, authority and responsibility *for* (rather than responsibility *to*) the client is marketed under the names of different models of psychotherapy each with its own variety of techniques. The outcome research, however, reminds us that models and techniques are far less crucial to positive outcome than the development of a connected relationship that will facilitate client effectiveness — a relationship characterized by genuineness, empathy and respect.

Building such a relationship is more easily said than done. In examining our own helping relationships against the criteria of the outcome research we can ask ourselves:

- Am I trusting my clients or trying to take responsibility *for* them?
- Do I view myself or the client as the expert in the relationship?
- Do I rely on techniques or intellectual interventions to “help” my clients to reach their goals?
- Am I listening closely to my clients or am I trying to change the way they see things?
- Am I able to validate client’s insights, strengths, and self-discovered decisions about change?
- Does my professional self-esteem depend on knowing that *I* changed my clients’ lives?

***After reading several times Peggy Natiello’s comments I thought I ought to give my own answers to the six questions Peggy asked in her article. I hope this may challenge others to respond likewise. Let Renaissance hear from you.***

*Ken Newton, Editor*

**QUESTION NO. 1.** Am I trusting my clients or trying to take responsibility for them?

**KEN’S ANSWER:** I am taking “responsibility” for creating the environment which is made up of my efforts at being empathic, genuine and respectful. This is a difficult and time consuming task. I cannot assume that the “client” is immediately aware of my empathy, genuineness, and respect for him/her.

**QUESTION NO. 2** Do I view myself or the client as the expert in the relationship?

**KEN’S ANSWER:** I do hope that I am the “expert” at creating the growthful environment for our relationship to flower. If there is an “expertise” involved it is my confidence and awareness of my “way of being” that enables this relationship to have a fertile soil in which to develop.

No matter what model of therapy we follow, the answers to these questions may indicate to what degree we are able to form authentic dialogue and connected, healing relationships with our clients.

In 15 years of training helping professionals, colleagues and I have placed the ability to develop healing relationships with clients at the core of the curriculum. We are pleased to see the therapeutic relationship, as Rogers described it more than 50 years ago, coming back into its own.

“It’s the relationship that heals, the relationship that heals, the relationship that heals” — *our* professional rosary.

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*Peggy Natiello, Ph.D. is in private practice and offers training in the person-centered approach through the Center for Interpersonal Growth, Inc. in the New York area and in New Mexico.*

**QUESTION NO. 3** Do I rely on techniques or intellectual interventions to “help” my clients to reach their goals?

**KEN’S ANSWER:** My technique and/or “intellectual interventions” are my answers of who and where I am with me and with the client. My ability to be empathic, caring, authentic has been developed through personal AND through intellectual awareness of myself. This has taken place through many helping relationships in my professional, academic and personal life. In that sense, these awarenesses of me, of my way of being, has been “taught”; I have been exposed to the growthful environments which have enabled me to grow and to change, positively I hope. Thus, I do have “techniques or intellectual interventions” which I have learned; which have enabled me to develop—by way of relationships that have provided me with an environment for growing and becoming.

*(continued on page 6)*

*The Relationship's The Thing continued*

**QUESTION NO. 4** Am I listening closely to my clients or am I trying to change the way they see things?

**KEN'S ANSWER:** I try very hard to listen—"listen" to the words, to the context in which they are said; to the volume and/or tension that accompanies the words—AND I seek clarification frequently as well as attempting to let the "client" know what I thought I heard. AND "yes" I am trying to change they way they see things. I would have no other reason for charging this client money or for being in dialogue with that person if I did not want them to "see and hear me" as well as I see and hear them.

**QUESTION NO. 5** Am I able to validate client's insights, strengths, and self-discovered decisions about change?

**KEN'S ANSWER:** This is a very significant question for the person-centered therapist to attempt to answer. If I may change "validation" to "support the thoughts and feelings expressed at that time" I can answer with a firm "yes." If I change (or interpret) "validate" to mean "agree with" I have a very different answer. I can accept (and do accept) many, or most (perhaps even all) thoughts and feelings. Physical behavior is something else again. My answers to this question could be stated and restated—calling for many versions of "validation."

**QUESTION NO. 6** Does my professional self-esteem depend on knowing that I changed my clients' lives?

**KEN'S ANSWER:** I do know that I have a feeling of responsibility for what anyone in relationship with me does. I cannot (do not want to) relieve myself of my responsibilities. That does not mean that my "self esteem depends" on what the other(s) that I am in relationship does, good, bad, or indifferent.

Since I agree with, support, and accept that "the relationship heals" when I am "in relationship" I am part of what the other part of the relationship thinks, feels, and does. This something is akin to responsibility I believe. If I am "good enough" AND if our relationship is "good enough" what the other does, thinks and feels will be "good enough."

Yes, I live by "our professional rosary"—IT'S THE RELATIONSHIP THAT HEALS.

—Ken Newton

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7:30pm Community Meeting

TUESDAY

9:00-12:00pm Community Meeting

1:30-3:30pm Small Groups

4:00-6:30pm Presentations

7:00-10:00pm Dinner and Social

WEDNESDAY

9:00-10:30am Small Groups

10:30-12:00pm Demonstrations

1:30-3:30pm Presentations

3:30-5:00pm Community Meeting

(1st Session Ends)

(2nd Session Begins)

8:30-10:30pm Transition Community

THURSDAY

9:00-12:00pm Community Meeting

1:30-3:30pm Small Groups

4:00-6:30pm Presentations

FRIDAY

9:00-12:00pm Community Meeting

1:30-3:30pm Presentations

3:30-5:30pm Small Groups

6:30pm Dinner and Social

SATURDAY

9:00-12:00pm Small Groups

1:30-3:30pm Presentations

3:30-5:30pm Small Groups

9:00-10:00pm Community Group

SUNDAY

9:00-12:00pm Community Group

\*Unless otherwise indicated, all lunches are from noon-1:30pm and dinners are open periods.



# ADPCA '96 CONFERENCE

## s c h e d u l e

### THURSDAY, MAY 22

- 7-9 Preconference Registration
- 9-5 Preconference training workshops
- 12-1:30 Lunch
- 4:30-6 Conference Registration continues
- 6-7:30 Dinner (South Dining Hall)
- 7-7:30 Presentation on Historical, Cultural Perspective of Kutztown Community Meeting

### SATURDAY, MAY 24

- 8-9:30 Breakfast
- 9:30 Presentations
- 11 Small Groups
- 12-1:30 Lunch
- 1:30 Presentations
- 3 Free Time
- 4 Community Meeting
- 7 Dinner and Social

### MONDAY, MAY 26

- 8-9 Continental Breakfast
- 9 Community Meeting
- 11-1:30 Brunch
- 1:30 Kite Flying

### COSTS:

- Registration: \$150.00
- Room: \$70.00 (4 nights)
- Board: \$45.00 (all meals)
- Total: \$265.00

Extra nights: \$17.00 per night  
 Dinner at social only: \$10.00  
 Individual meals: may be purchased on-site  
 Pre-conference Workshop fee: \$5.00 per session  
 Off-campus accommodations available at local and area hotels, motels and B&B's. Call for details.

### FRIDAY, MAY 23

- 8-9:30 Breakfast
- 9:30 Presentations
- 11 Small Groups
- 12-1:30 Lunch
- 1:30 Presentations
- 3 Business Meeting
- 4:30 Free Time
- 6-7:30 Dinner
- 8 Community Meeting

### SUNDAY, MAY 25

- 8-9:30 Breakfast
- 9:30 Business Meeting
- 11 Free Time
- 12-1:30 Lunch
- 1:30 Presentations
- 3 Presentations
- 4:30 Small Group
- 6-7:30 Dinner
- 8 Community Meeting

*“The central hypothesis of the person-centered approach can be briefly stated: It is that the individual has within him or herself vast resources for self-understanding, for altering his or her self-concept, attitudes and self-directed behavior and that these resources can be tapped if only a definable climate of facilitative psychological attitudes can be provided.”*

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# ADPCA '96

ASSOCIATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSON-CENTERED APPROACH

Kutztown, Pennsylvania • May 22-May 27

PRE-CONFERENCE TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Thursday, May 22

SESSION 1: 9:00 - 10:30 a.m.

SESSION 3: 1:30 - 3:00 p.m.

SESSION 2: 11:00 - 12:30 p.m.

SESSION 4: 3:30 - 5:00 p.m.

LUNCH: 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. (*Included in program fee*)

\*\*\*Trainers may submit proposals for 1-4 time slots. Presently, 2 programs are scheduled:

**PROGRAM 1:** Theory and Practice of Client-Centered Therapy: (Marge Witty & Susan Pildes)

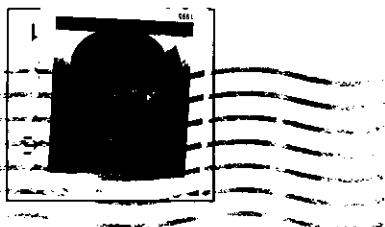
This program will include theoretical discussion and video presentations of client-centered therapists in therapy, and will offer practice in the empathic understanding response process and all that it entails [4 time slots]

**PROGRAM 2:** The promise of Human Relations Groups: (Ken Newton)

This program addresses theoretical and practical issues related to future possibilities associated with person-centered oriented groups [4 time slots]

**COSTS:** All pre-conference training workshops are offered at a nominal fee of \$5.00 per session (full day = \$20.00). Fees are required to off-set conference expenses, and are not to be used for payment to workshop presenters. Fee waivers and reductions may be available upon request.

**REGISTRATION & ROOM & BOARD:** Consult registration information at end of conference announcement, this issue.



Renaissance  
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