
Editorial

Potsdam and Beyond

In July (12–16) 2006 we have the 7th triennial conference of the World Association in Potsdam, near Berlin. The theme of the conference is *Leading a Good Life : A PCE Perspective of Health*. This theme can cover a wide range of topics as evidenced by the keynotes and the papers already proposed. It emphasizes, for example, the ‘positive mental health’ that may be encouraged by PCE approaches which are particularly facilitative of the development of self-esteem and the winning of personal power. Research evaluations within mental health generally measure outcomes in terms of ‘symptom reduction’ but the whole family of PCE therapies recognize the importance of helping the client to claim their own personal power through self-awareness and self-expression. This emphasis in PCE on the development of ‘positive mental health’ is taken in the knowledge that it is likely to have a more enduring impact upon the person than simply the reduction of a present symptom.

Potsdam in July will be a time when people, normally from nearly thirty countries, can meet to share the work they are doing, test the boundaries of the approach and consider new possibilities. The Journal can then take that communication and learning forward, broadcasting it further in a systematic fashion by publishing many of the papers that are offered. Everyone offering a paper is encouraged to give a copy of it to any of the editors who will put it through the normal review process or give guidance on what needs to be done to make it publishable. All four editors will be at the conference to receive papers from presenters but we also encourage people to send the papers to us in advance in order to move up the publication schedule. Our e-mail addresses for this purpose are given at the end of this editorial.

After Potsdam the conference moves on to a biennial pattern, with the 2008 event scheduled for July 6–10 in Norwich, under the theme *Present Strengths and Future Challenges*. This will be the first time the conference will have taken place in England. The venue for the 2010 conference should ideally be decided by the members present at Potsdam. Any prospective parties who might be interested in bringing the 2010 conference to their country should contact the Board of WAPCEPC, <secretariat@pce-world.org>, as soon as possible.

The present Issue of *PCEP* contains four papers and five fairly extensive book reviews. The papers come from authors residing in the USA (Warner, Brodley), Scotland (Moerman & McLeod) and Belgium (Depestele). They offer the usual wide range in terms of topic, methodology and specialism within the PCE ‘family’. Warner, in a paper we have been eagerly anticipating for some time, presents a PCE perspective on psychopathology that

looks at mental health not in terms of 'disorders' but through various 'difficult processes'. In the paper Warner discusses her concept of 'soft' phenomena and 'soft' meanings and helps to bridge the conceptual divide between 'self as process' and 'self as structure' by delineating the concept of 'selving' whereby the person tends to symbolize processes as structures. That conceptual 'bridge' is crucial for the PCE world if we are to articulate with the conventional conceptualizations within clinical psychology while retaining our concept of the 'person as process'.

It is interesting to realize that this 'process' focus is one of the features that unites all the therapies within the PCE approach. Both Carl Rogers and Eugene Gendlin historically offered analyses of the 'person as process' that were highly sophisticated for their times of writing and quite different from other therapeutic approaches that tended to be more structural or simply behavior oriented. Of course, within the PCE family we also have considerable diversity with at least three different emphases represented in modern times — these might approximately be described as a 'process' emphasis, a 'relationship' emphasis and an emphasis on the importance of 'non-directivity'. It is easy for that non-directive imperative to become lost and for us to forget that much of what we are about is 'empowering' and that that might best be achieved by actively engaging with clients while exercising great care to not take power away from them by being directive in terms of content or process. Thus we are pleased to publish the paper by Brodley on 'Non-directivity in client-centered therapy', clarifying misunderstandings and misrepresentations and bringing us up-to-date not only with the history of the non-directive imperative but also with its present challenges.

Moerman and McLeod describe an empirical study exploring the impact of PCT on the self-awareness and self-esteem of clients who have an alcohol problem. While this study is small in scale, unlike other investigations, it works with clients whose difficulties are particularly chronic. The study is one of a few recent works that challenge the presumption that, in working with people with an alcohol problem, the focus should be on the alcohol. Moerman and McLeod discover the significant impact that may be obtained by focusing the therapy on the whole person.

In the fourth paper Depestele continues his exploration of how experiential feeling and language interact. This paper follows on from others published in *PCEP* 3(2) and 4(1), bringing together therapy and linguistics and introducing readers to concepts such as 'rhetoric', 'poetics', 'tropes', 'word figures', 'thought figures' and many more. These ideas promise to provide a much more concrete and specific description of types of client experiencing and ways the therapist can facilitate experiential work.

Of added interest in this issue are the five book reviews. These attest first of all to the diligence and hard work of our Book Review Editor, Martin van Kalmthout and the reviewers he has recruited to provide the reviews. They also provide yet another example of the diversity of our approaches as manifested in important recent books. Thus, we have reviews of books in which the Person-Centered Approach is introduced (Thorne's review of Tudor et al.) or personally synthesized (Lietaer's review of Barrett-Lennard); where it is viewed through the lens of focusing (Depestele's review of Purton) or feminism (Keys' review of Proctor and Napier); and where the underlying philosophical and ethical foundations of our approaches

are described (van Blarikom on Gantt and Williams). Please remember to let Martin van Kalmthout at <m.vankalmthout@planet.nl> know of any new and relevant books.

We want to draw attention to a technical feature of Volume 5 of *PCEP*. In this volume we have moved to a more accurate representation of APA style in the presentation of references. Future contributors less familiar with APA can use the references in this issue for guidance and will also find useful links on the Journal homepage <www.pce-world.org/pcep.htm>.

Finally, we are pleased to announce that the Institute for Person-Centered Studies in Austria (IPS of APG), like the British Association for the Person-Centred Approach (BAPCA), has decided to include the *PCEP* subscription for their members who work as registered psychotherapists. This is the first non-English speaking association to make use of this special possibility for organizational members to provide *PCEP* for all their members at a special rate. We encourage others to follow their example and ask the Board of their association to contact WAPCEPC for the same deal <secretariat@pce-world.org>.

Look out for us in Potsdam in July.

Robert Elliott <robert.elliott@utoledo.edu>

Dave Mearns <dave@davemearns.com>

Peter F. Schmid <pfs@pfs-online.at>

William B. Stiles <pcep@muohio.edu>

February, 2006