Carl Rogers a Humanistic Approach

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Abstract

Carl Rogers is a theorist who held unique views on human nature. His theories have been applied to the educational system and psychotherapy techniques. These theories are used all over the world and applied to many therapist’s psychotherapy practices. In this paper I will examine his history, how he established his beliefs, the theories he developed, and who he was as a person. I intend on analyzing his work and the works of others regarding his theories.

Carl Rogers a Humanistic Approach

Carl Rogers is known as one of the most prominent psychologist’s in American History. He had an empathetic understanding, an extreme level of kindness, a unique perspective of human nature, and a genuine concern for others. His authentic view on human nature influenced psychology and the educational system. He created a method that was applied to psychotherapy, as a therapeutic approach. Along with utilizing the same method to improve student learning. He established theories that are still utilized today all over the world. Developing a diverse set of techniques and out of the box ideas about how a therapist should be.

Rogers midwestern farm values instilled in him a belief system and a unique attitude towards human nature. He had strong beliefs that individuals have a unique capacity for self-actualization. That at the core of human nature was the ability to be freed from dependence into independence were the ability to manage and solve their own problems lies. Rogers believed that human beings act out in ways that are most beneficial to them. Given the right circumstances and guidance individuals can be freed and evolve in ways that most benefit their lives. Thus, eliminating self-defeating motives into a better place of human evolvement.

 In 1940, Rogers, unique perspective in his view of psychotherapy was presented in Counseling and psychotherapy (1942). As his growing awareness of his own unique perspective evolved along came his client-centered approach many know and use today. As did his student-centered teaching method to which he devoted an entire chapter of his book to. From this came his non-directive approach, engrossed with a new view point on the importance of attitudes instead of techniques. His view towards groups where that the group leaders set the mood while clarifying the members purposes. Leaders, according to Roger, must serve as flexible resources for the group members (Zimring, 1999). There are three central conditions described by Rogers that encourage and influence therapeutic personality change. The relationship between the therapist and the client are one of the conditions. In this central condition the therapist must be congruent in nature. They must maintain a level of transparency and genuineness. This condition also holds the regard for willingness that the therapist must maintain in how they communicate with clients. The second condition includes the therapist’s ability to experience and maintain an unconditional positive regard for their clients. Rogers articulated that the therapist must experience a warm acceptance of every aspect of their client’s personal experiences with regard to it being a objective part of the client themselves. In doing so the therapist will experience an unconditional positive regard thus, it is imperative the therapist to do this. Thirdly is the therapist must experience a genuine empathetic understanding regarding the client’s internal frame of reference and endeavors. Countertransference may help the therapist to build this type of empathy for their patients. The therapist must also hold the capacity to articulate this empathy to the client. Rogers articulated that to develop this type of empathy the therapist should experience the client’s experiences as their own. In doing so they will express a genuine empathetic nature regarding their client. According to Rogers, these conditions are sufficient enough to encourage change while also being necessary for the change to occur. There doesn’t need to be an understanding of the client’s current personality or current problems because the therapist is guiding change of the personality and the solving of problems in their lives. The therapist only needs to be congruent in nature and empathetic in their understandings of what the client experienced as if they were your own (Zimring, 1999).

Group therapy developed by Rogers was known as “The Facilitation of Encounter Groups”. His techniques include him opening his group sessions in an unstructured way. Voicing to the group how he believed they would all know each other better at the end then they do in the beginning. He made it a point to be sensitive while carefully listening and articulating empathy to each member in the group as they shared their experiences in each session (Rogers, N.D). Carl Rogers client-centered therapy is also known as the person-centered approach. He had a unique way of engaging with individuals with many diverse backgrounds and experiences. He viewed their complications as problems with living. His theory of psychotherapy with children whom are troubled was developed in 1939. From that point he expanded his theoretical approach to apply to all individuals in a singular, couple, or group setting. In his published works was a theory of motivation and personality development and a theory of group interaction and interpersonal relationships. Extrapolating his views on client-centered values to education, marriage, group encounter, personal power, and group resolution during his lengthy career. The United Kingdom, Germany, France, Greece, Portugal, Demark, Poland, Hungary, The Netherlands, Italy, Japan, Brazil, Mexico, Australia, and South Africa, as well as here in the United States and Canada practice and utilize his person-centered approach in today’s current society. There is a world association, contactable on the internet, which was founded in Lisbon during 1997. This association demonstrates the evolvement and continuity of the approach accredited the World Association for Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy and Counseling. Rogers, as can be seen through his accomplishments, impacted psychotherapy and continues to impact psychology today. His methods are applied to new theoretical concepts and psychology research. Rogers experience allowed him to construct a theory which included how individuals hold a capacity to hold resources within themselves that promote self-knowledge and self-healing. Holding the notion that one can change their personality and self-evolve when circumstances and conditions are fit to do so. Implicating that there are individuals and environmental influences that encourage and influence ones’ ability to grow and develop into an evolved version of

themselves. While some influence and encourage no growth or development therefore, prohibiting growth and human evolvement. Individuals inherent self-directive processes can encourage a greater self-differentiation with more effective self-regulating techniques. With the idea that they possess more self-understanding and self-acceptance. Rogers description of the human being’s motivation to realize and enhance inheritable potentials was utilized in his construct of the “actualizing tendency”. According to Rogers, to have an effective, successful therapeutic experience in psychotherapy one first needs to develop and maintain a therapeutic relationship that is congruent and authentic in nature (Witty, 2007).

The construct of congruence according to Rogers, refers the process that occurs within the therapist. The therapist should experience a state of wholeness and integration within themselves. The therapist will be undistracted by their own concerns. This dynamic inner state of being will eliminate any concerns they hold of their own. They will be fully present with their client. Congruence is described as a distinguishable inner experience opposed to a behavior. However, behaviors and ways of communicating can be describable as congruent in nature.

The theory behind congruence is that is emerges from the therapist’s own self-acceptance and own positive regard. It evolves from having a high capacity for self-awareness free from any inner censorship. If the therapist is congruent it can be seen in how they convey to their clients any qualities of genuineness and transparency with a willingness that is known. The client should feel of himself when in the presence of the therapist as a person not the therapist enacting a professional role. Thus, it doesn’t imply self-disclosure as it is a behavior inaccurately equated. The client-centered therapist is a person and is engaging in a practical form of art and discipline regarding empathetic understanding of the client. It is a conscious and disciplined form of affection in the provision of the core conditions in servicing the client. It can be considered an enactment of kindness and expertise, an application of technique. However, if this aspect is stressed too much it may miss its fundamental character. The relationship between the therapist and the client is truly the essence of client-centered therapy. To which the therapist strongest technique or skill is being their true selves. The reflexive awareness of one’s being-in-relation with one’s self and the client is involved in this complexity of client-centered therapy (Witty, 2007).

Regarding Group sessions Rogers held on to a specific belief system. Rogers held an acceptance for his clients in individual therapy and group therapy. Articulating that he always accepts a group for what it is. He does not push his participants to be a part of the group. He referred to this as remaining on the psychological side lines, further stating that if that is where they chose to be then allow them to be there. He had an acceptance for the ones who preferred not to speak, referring to that as muteness. He also accepted statements at face value, believing it was the role of the therapist to be gullible. He would let them know that if they were lying that were free to relinquish the lie at any point they felt right to do so. Rogers encouraged the members to discuss present feelings as he responded better to present feelings rather than past experiences. But he had a willingness to respond to both if needed. He didn’t feel the need to control the group or control the outcome of the group. He held strong realistic values and never expected to accomplish a weeks’ worth of processing in an eight-hour period. Rogers, during generalized or intellectualizing discussions within the group, would often opt out for selecting the self-referent meanings as a response. He would point out members differences in view points in ways that would allow and accept the different views. Thus, eliminating arguments over viewpoints. He did this in such subtle ways the members would be none the wiser. Often utilizes his feelings of what he felt in the moment, whether it related to one person or the whole group. He would express his positive emotions as easily as the negative ones. Further, stating it is with risk to share such feelings and one could affect the group when to expressive. Rogers would utilize the confronting of feelings during feedback. If one of the members showed distress because of it he would encourage them to process what they were feelings. He would even confront and express his own problems during group. He believed this helped his members to confront and face their own problems and help them to express it freely. He did not try to probe or dissect what he believed to be the reason for someone’s behaviors. Articulating that it would never be anything more than a high-level guess. He allowed the members to move around, stretch, change places with someone else, and etc. Also using physical contact to console his clients. He was a hugger, a kisser, and a consoler. If someone was crying her comforted them physically holding them as they wept. Rogers was an extremely empathetic man who loved his clients and showed them he loved them (Rogers, N.D).

##### Roger’s was raised with values instilled from his midwestern farm life. He had a unique understanding of human nature with a desire to help others find their true selves. He believed the better aware a therapist was about themselves the more they could help others. Rogers captivated the essence of what it meant to be congruent. He believed that allowing oneself to be congruent in nature, with self-awareness, self-understanding, and self-acceptance where the cornerstones of the therapeutic relationship. Rogers held strong beliefs concerning the true nature of human beings being essentially good. He had a unique regard for self-actualization and self-healing. His theories and beliefs are still a fundamental part of education and psychotherapy. It is used all over the world today and will be a part of psychology always. He was a genuine man with a kindness that changed the lives of many he touched. He left a legacy behind that many will continue to follow.

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