**Transcript**

**Announcer**
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**Dr. Marty Jencius**
Hello, I am Dr. Marty Jencius from Kent State University. In this week on Counselor Audio Source, Dr. Jill Nelson, contributing editor, interviews Dr. Wade Hannon both from North Dakota State University about the person-centered approach in counseling.

**Dr. Jill Nelson**
Well thanks, Wade, for agreeing to be interviewed for Counsel Audio Source. I guess I first will ask you what your background and interest with the person-centered approach is.

**Dr. Wade Hannon**
Well thank you, Jill, for inviting me. I guess I became interested in Rogers’ work when I was in graduate school in the mid ‘70s. In undergraduate school, I was very much interested in accentual and phenomenal and logical philosophy and so when I came across Rogers, his ideas really made a lot of sense having come from the background. And then I was fortunate in my doctoral program to have a professor who became my major professor who was person centered. In my Master’s Program there weren’t any person centered faculty, but for doctoral level, I had Don Rye at the University of Arkansas who unfortunately died at an early age, about five years ago. He was only 61, but Don was a major influence as a person. He was also someone who really embodied the core conditions of Rogers’ approach. Don was without a doubt the most non-judgmental and accepting person that I have ever had a relationship with and that was very good both as a student and then as a practitioner and educator to be able to rely on him for support as I was going through different things.

**Dr. Jill Nelson**
Good, great. Maybe if you could just share with us your perceptions or your perspective on the history or the background of the person-centered approach.

**Dr. Wade Hannon**
Okay. Well, there is an excellent book by Geoffrey Barrett-Lennard and I am blanking on the title right now. But is basically that puts Rogers’ ideas in historical context and talks about influences on Rogers. One major influence was John Dewey who was very big in talking about democracy and education and talking about in essence the freedom that individuals would experience in that kind of a environment. But Rogers got his doctorate, when I think he was 27, from Columbia University and then originally it was called a Non-Directive Approach to separate it from Williamson’s Directive Approach in counseling and then in the ‘50s, I believe it started being called Client Centered and then in the late ‘70s or ‘80s, it morphed into Person-Centered Approach because Rogers was applying his ideas to context outside of counseling and therapy and was using it in community settings and so on.

**Dr. Jill Nelson**
So the client, the word client became...

**Dr. Wade Hannon**
Person, yes.

**Dr. Jill Nelson**
Okay, good. How do you see what is the state of the person-centered approach today?

**Dr. Wade Hannon**
Well, I think many other approaches are with noble exception of Alice’s (ph) ideas about working with people that they appropriate some of Rogers’ ideas about the relationship and about being empathic and so on. So it had a huge influence in terms of all the approaches to counseling and therapy. It is just unfortunate that many of those approaches forget about the non-directive part of it, and they sort of use the relationship to trick the client and to being comfortable and then they start being disrespectful to the client and start directing them and telling them what they should or should not be doing.

As an approach separate from other approaches, I think it is still alive and well, it is not as widely used in the United States as it was, even 30 years ago when I was in graduate school. In other parts of the world, it is very prevalent.

In England, there are a number of counsel training programs that are person centered and the majority of counselors in England would identify themselves as person centered. Throughout Europe, it is a very strong approach. In parts of Latin America, it is very strong and parts of Asia like in Japan, the person-centered approach is still very prevalent. In Taiwan, Hong Kong, there are person-centered practitioners and educators there, and in South Africa, there is a person-centered presence as well. Rogers was in South Africa before he died and there should have been a number of people there that have been person centered.

**Dr. Jill Nelson**
What is your guess about why it is flourishing in others areas of the world but not so much here?

**Dr. Wade Hannon**
Well, I think because here in the U.S. the predominant view of people has been so heavily influenced by the economic system that both in terms of the relation of the individual to the profit-making status of the economy but also through the influence of managed care and changes like that where we have begun as a society to go back to looking at people as objects. We have gone to looking at counseling as sort of like fixing a car. If that has a bad carburetor you replace the carburetor, if that has a fuel pump, you replace the fuel pump and there is a view of people as being objects that can be “fixed” as if they were cars and there is a lot of these as they are called manualized or as I prefer to call it, 7:38 counseling that where you have a -- if it's this then you do A, B, and C, and if it's that you do B, C, and D and so on and so forth. So people are beginning to kind of look at people as if they were just things to be manipulated and so I think that is part of it because the person-centered approach is at its core respectful of human beings and respectful of each individual as a unique person. And our society is not very much interested in looking at those unique things unless it is something that a corporation can make money out of, you know, if you can sell records or sell books or if you can sell automobiles, whatever.

**Dr. Jill Nelson**
So how would you go about fixing that problem, I guess?

**Dr. Wade Hannon**
Well, I am not sure I would want to fix something but for me, it is -- for one thing the person-centered approach is at its core, I think countercultural. When it was started by Rogers all those decades ago, and in its various manifestations, it is always being countercultural. It is about establishing an environment where people can grow and flourish and to begin actualizing themselves.

One of the things that has happened over the years is that there have not been a lot of academicians that were person centered. Rogers left teaching back in the ’60s, I believe it was, and went to the Western Behavioral Sciences Institute, which then he and some other people formed what is now called the Center for the Studies of the Person or C.S.P. and from C.S.P. he did his work in terms of offering training for people doing encounter groups, workshops, and seeing clients. C.S.P. is still in existence in the La Jolla section of San Diego, but there has not been a lot of folks either in counseling or psychology or other areas that were person centered that were teaching in academic settings.

So I think a part of it is the people are person centered, there are person centered that we need to have more of those that are involved with the education of counselors and psychologists and so on. There are some people in counselor education that I am aware of that they are person centered and they are doing that. There is a couple of psychology programs that have like there is one in Chicago, that has a minor and the doctoral program in the person centered approach.

Also, a part of the problem I think is that with 11:00 they talk about being exposed to a variety to theoretical influences and oftentimes people take that to mean that you cannot have a program that is theoretically focused and theoretically based, which I do not think is true. As long as one is exposed to other theories, you could still have a program that would be focused on a particular theory, whether it would be person centered or you can have one that would even be a broader focus of humanistic approaches in general and then you can have within that person centered and what other kind of humanistic approaches that are around. So I think that part of it is getting more people in counselor training programs that are person centered that are teaching classes.

**Dr. Jill Nelson**
I know that you ascribe or believe in a person-centered approach when it comes to pedagogy. How does that look differently or how is that different from the traditional approaches?

**Dr. Wade Hannon**
Well, it is radically different in that you want the students to move from an external locus of evaluation to an internal locus of evaluation, where they do not rely on what other people are saying about them for their view of themselves and their view of their abilities as a person and as a learner to them be able to look at themselves and saying, well you know, I am strong in this area, I am not so strong in this area, so on and so forth.

**Dr. Jill Nelson**
Does that similar conditions of work 12.43?

**Dr. Wade Hannon**
Yes, very much, very much and so what I do in my classes is that I do not have assignments. I might have some suggestions and things that they are just suggested. Students develop a, what they call, a learning plan and they talk about what they want to get out of the class and then what they are going to do to help them to facilitate the process. And then at the end of the semester, they evaluate themselves based on the learning plan and they turn in a grade that they believe that they have earned. As long as, I see that what they have done is what that is consistent with that and that they have actually done those things, then that is the grade that I turn in.

I have only had two times, one was about probably ten years of doing classes this way where I disagreed with students and that was two cases where students have given themselves Bs and I thought they should get an A, and that is why I gave them As. One person was upset about that, another person had no problem with that. The person was upset, she and I have process set and I do not think there is a problem with that today.

But the other thing is that I do not assume that I know things that the student should have to know. My role is to facilitate the process. I share what my views are on things, what my take on different things are, but more so it is to facilitate that process and to help them to look at what they are thinking and what they are feeling and so on and it is more of a facilitation process than a “teacher” and I view myself as a facilitator of learning and not as a teacher.

The other thing that is different is a deep and abiding respect for the student and from other colleagues that I have had and from folks that I have known that have talked in other programs and in fact believe that I had as a student, that majority of them do not really have that. They view themselves as some kind of “expert” who is kind of imparting the knowledge to the student. I think Rogers’ approach really dovetails well with Paulo Freire whose book ‘*Pedagogy of the Oppressed’* is an excellent book and one that I use in one of my classes. Freire is obviously more political than Rogers but I think that if they were alive today and could get together to discuss things, I am sure they would find that they agreed on most things. So I think that there is a lot of Rogers’ work on education. His classic book is *‘Freedom to Learn’*. I think my favorite is the first edition, which is still available through a variety of sources and I use that book along with the Freire book in the doctoral teaching class that we have in our program.

**Dr. Jill Nelson**
Good, thanks. Well, if someone today were wanting to find out more information about the person-centered approach or to become active in this, what avenues would they have to that?

**Dr. Wade Hannon**
There is an organization in the U.S. called the Association for the Development of the Person Centered Approach and we have annual meetings that are held throughout the country. This last summer the ADPCA was held here at North Dakota State University in Fargo. I was the chair of the conference this summer. So people can find out about that by going to adpca.org. It is the webpage for the organization. The conference is going to be held in New York City this next summer. So it moves around. The year before it was here in Fargo, it was in Warwick, England. So it moves around quite a bit.

**Dr. Jill Nelson**
And a quite a variety of places it sounds like.

**Dr. Wade Hannon**
Yes. The organization publishes a quarterly newsletter, which is an online newsletter and vendors a journal that currently is published one time per year. There also is an international organization called the World Association for Person Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy and Counseling. I do not think it would have been possible to have a longer name than that for the organization.

**Dr. Jill Nelson**
It is a very long name.

**Dr. Wade Hannon**
Yes and I was at the conference in Chicago where the organization was formally launched and was able to amend -- the original name lacked ‘and counseling’ at the end and so to include those virtuoso (ph) counselors, I made a motion to change the name to add that because as I said in speaking to my motion that there are a number others that are person centered, that do not view ourselves as psychotherapists rather as counselors and it meets every three years. This last summer it met in Potsdam, Germany and then in three years, it is going to be in England. I forget which town in England, but that would be another one and I do not know what the webpage for that is but one could just look up the World Association for Person Centered and I suspect he would find it there. The World Association has both organizational and individual memberships that are available. Most of the organizations like the British Association for Person Centered Approach, it is a member of the World Association. The U.S. Association is not a member. The U.S. Association is in many regards a little more -- what would be the term. The U.S. Association, basically, is an anarchist association in the true sense of anarchy in that it is against hierarchy and is against things that separate people and very much egalitarian, so there have been debates over the past few years about whether ADPCA should be a part of the World Association or not. ADPCA uses a consensus to make decisions and there have been too many people that have objected for us to reach a consensus decision on that. So there is those two different groups that are available.

Within ACA, there is the Counseling Association for Humanistic Education and Development (C-AHEAD) that there are people in there that are person centered. Lothaire (ph) is one person that comes to mind, but there are some folks, there are person centered in that would be another group where folks could link up with person-centered practitioners and counselor educators.

**Dr. Jill Nelson**
Is there a place, journals, or other places where you see a person-centered publication?

**Dr. Wade Hannon**
Yeah, there has been -- in Journal Counsel Development, there have been articles over the years on different aspects of person-centered approach, counselor education supervision and other ACA journals. I have seen things over the years. There is also in psychology journal like the counseling psychologists helping articles, the humanistic psychologist, which is a division of journal of one of the divisions of APA. There is the association for Humanistic Psychology. There are journal which, I believe, is called the Journal of Humanistic Psychology, if my memory serves me right, that has articles. So there are a number of different venues where people get person-centered work published.

**Dr. Jill Nelson**
Great. Where do you see the person-centered approach headed in the future? What is the future?

**Dr. Wade Hannon**
Well, it is really hard to say. I have never really been much on trying to forecast the future, but I do see there are a number of younger folks both in counseling and in counselor education that are very interested in the person-centered approach and they consider themselves person centered. Here at North Dakota State, there is a number of the master students that when they go through the technique’s class that I usually do in the summer time, and they like the person-centered approach and will identify themselves as person centered although I am not sure how thoroughly that they grasp the approach. Because I think nothing against the students, it is just that that I think to truly be a person-centered practitioner requires a lot of practice and a lot of understanding and to be person centered and I think also that in other classes and then in work settings the people are oftentimes to borrow a phrase from Star Wars, they are seduced by the dark side of the force and start becoming direct even and start thinking themselves as someone who knows things that they should be imparting to their clients which is I think pretty dangerous kind of think to do. But it is hard to say.

There is the myth that person-centered counseling is always a long process and I worked in Community Mental Health Center for a number of years in the 1980s and I would say that the mean number of sessions that I would have with clients would be probably around six. There were some that only came in for two or three and some were there for several, but people will say, well, what this kind of managed care and employee assistance program, kind of 24.46 where people sometimes only have two or three sessions that you have to “be directive” which I think is a very shortsighted. But I think that as a person-centered practitioner that one can be in those environments and can have a positive impact in regards to clients that one works with. You have to sort of wink and nod about all the diagnosis and all that stuff.

Whenever I teach the diagnosis class, I would say that I will only do it as long as the students agree it they will not really believe in it, they just need to learn it because it is something that is required for people that work in community settings, but do not start thinking of clients in those categories. Oftentimes, I would have colleagues that would say, well, you know, at 2 o’clock I have my paranoid schiz coming in or at 3 o’clock, I have my maniac depressive and so on. No longer seeing a person, they were seeing a diagnosis.

So where it is going to go, I do not know. I hope that our society moves away from this instrumental mechanistic view of people that we have. I think we are hurting a lot as a group of people because of these assumptions and beliefs that are being held, that are being kind of forced on us by the dominant culture. So hopefully, we will have some sort of a humanistic revival and specifically, a person-centered revival.

**Dr. Jill Nelson**
Okay. Well, thank you so much for your time. Are there things that I did not touch on or things you feel were left out? You would like to add?

**Dr. Wade Hannon**
I cannot really recall anything that I was thinking about before came in and I would just like to thank you for asking me do this and giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts and feelings with folks that are listening and hope that there are people who would find this helpful or meaningful in some way.

**Dr. Jill Nelson**
Yeah. I appreciate your time and I know I have learned a lot, just from working with you and from this today.

**Dr. Wade Hannon**
Thank you.

**Dr. Jill Nelson**
Thank you.

**Announcer**
You just heard an interview of Dr. Wade Hannon done by contributing editor, Dr. Jill Nelson, both of North Dakota State University about the person-centered approach and counseling. Look for previous podcasts, show notes and listener feedback on the podcasts web site at CounselorAudioSource.net. Listeners can leave comments or questions for our interview guests or hosts through our skype.com, Internet telephone id, Counselor Audio Source. Or by calling 330-871.

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