

Brief Encounter with the Taos Institute

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Featuring a Book on Narratives of Transporting a Relational-Conversational Practice: Across Contexts and Disciplines

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We live in challenging times, with daily changes in our worlds. Adding the pandemic to our everyday lives, fundamental normalness and security have become normlessness and insecurity. What I have learned from clients, colleagues, and friends is that masking and quarantining, and the horrible early deaths of friends and loved ones, made them feel fearful, weary, alienated, and irritated. Now, coupled with the global economic downturn and the war in Ukraine, radical uncertainty for some has become an obstacle to imaging a hopeful future. Some even report their sense of dignity and imagined futures were adversely affected.

Shortly before the onset of the pandemic, Taos Associate Diane Gehart and I committed to edit a book with narratives of how others were translating or applying collaborative-dialogic (relational-conversational) therapy approach to diverse contexts, disciplines, and cultures. We invited colleagues who were using the concepts and practice orientation beyond the therapeutic milieu.

During the height of the pandemic the authors wrote on work completed before it. Most highlighted the importance of relationship and conversation. For instance, authors narrated stories of climate activist consultants, educators, researchers, medical professionals, and IT company managers who successfully engaged in relationships and conversations that created spaces and processes for surprising change. Other authors wrote on the ever-presence of ethical and political considerations of the practice and on the similarities in Toni Morrison's Nobel Prize acceptance speech and the principles of a relational-conversational approach. The narrated stories impressed, fascinated, and touched us. We enthusiastically wanted to share them.

Diane and I created a [Zoom Book Symposium](#) for authors to highlight fragments of their narratives about their experiences in crossing contextual and disciplinary boundaries. What we think their work represents is a *humanizing* factor. That is, practitioners who considered themselves as human beings working with other human beings, meeting and interacting with others with genuine respect and interest, and in which people felt valued, listened to, and treated with dignity. Importantly, for me is something I learned years ago from interviewing therapy clients about their interactions with professional helpers such as therapists, physicians, teachers, principals, attorneys, judges, and soccer coaches, in other words, people perceived to be in positions of authority. What were the characteristics of the people with whom they had successful relationships and would not mind meeting again and what were the characteristics of those they wanted to never encounter again? They emphasized the importance of leaving the successful relationship engagements with their dignity intact. They felt that if they did not have a resolution, they could have *freedom* from being imprisoned by their life challenges and a new sense of *hope* for desired futures.

We hope you can read some of the narratives or view the authors summaries on [YouTube](#). Each chapter author and their colleagues are uniquely, and in a small dynamic manner, making the world a better place. At The Taos Institute, we aim to make the world a better place one conversation at a time. I would insert "humanizing relationship." Find the book at: <https://www.therapythatworksinstitute.com/CDPractices>.

